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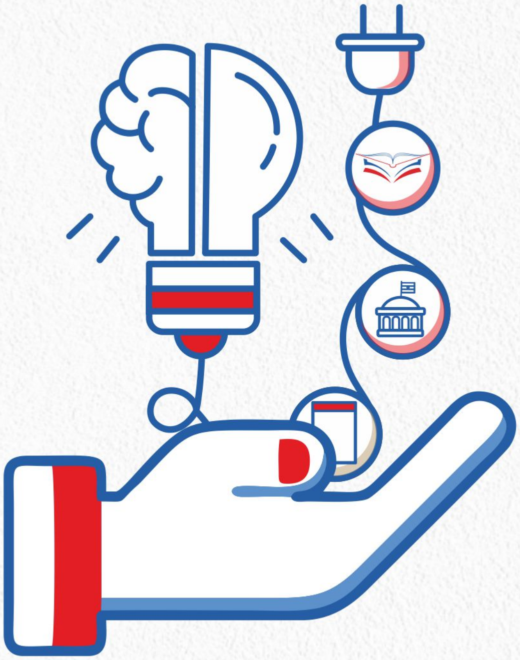

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Answer Wring

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Preface

To the Aspirants

The UPSC Civil Services Mains Examination is not merely a test of knowledge but a challenge of precision, clarity, and smart revision. In the dynamic and ever-evolving syllabus of **General Studies Paper II**, the International Relations (IR) section continues to play a decisive role, consistently accounting for 4 to 5 questions (around 50 marks) every year. Recognizing this, we bring to you meticulously curated **Mains-365- IR Document**, designed to serve as your ultimate revision companion.

This document is not just a compilation of bilateral visits and summits, it is **a strategic tool crafted to help aspirants** enhance answer quality, incorporate contemporary geopolitical shifts with conceptual clarity, and fetch those crucial extra marks that make the difference in the final selection. With theme-based categorization driven by **deep PYQ analysis, value-added insights, and model-ready frameworks**, this compilation allows you to revise comprehensively and quickly, even during the intense last few days before the exam. Designed to be exam-centric, crisp, and insightful, this IR Document is your pathway to smart preparation and a strategic edge in the examination hall.

Let this be your go-to guide for clarity, for revision, and for success.

Q.1 WHY MAKES GS-II INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS SO DYNAMIC AND DIFFFICULT TO MASTER?

- **Fragmented Sources:** Jumping between multiple newspapers, MEA websites, and diplomatic commentaries creates confusion and information overload.
- **Journalistic vs. Analytical Disconnect:** Writing answers based purely on newspaper editorials often make them sound journalistic. UPSC demands theoretical underpinnings (like Realism, Liberalism, or Constructivism) and strategic vocabulary.
- **Static-Dynamic Gap:** Knowing the historical Gujral Doctrine is not enough if you cannot link it to contemporary Neighbourhood First policy challenges or connectivity initiatives.
- **Changing Question Formats:** About 30% of IR questions now quote a specific statement and ask you to evaluate it, requiring rapid contextualization and critical analysis.

This document is built to solve these exact challenges.

Q.2 WHY IS THIS DOCUMENT YOUR EDGE IN GS PAPER-II IR?

- **Mirrors UPSC's Demand and Trends:** It is strictly aligned with the UPSC trend from 2013–2025, which saw over 50 questions asked across key themes.
- **Prioritizes High-Yield Themes:** It heavily focuses on India's Neighbourhood and International Organisations, ensuring your efforts yield maximum ROI.
- **Captures Trend Shifts:** It maps the transition of UPSC's focus, from early questions on neighbourhood crises to contemporary questions on macro-systemic issues like energy security, UN reform deadlocks, and India-Africa digital partnerships.
- **1-Page 'Topic at a Glance':** It provides **ready-to-use frameworks** for some of the major themes in IR.

Q.3 HOW DOES IT ENHANCE ANSWER WRITING?

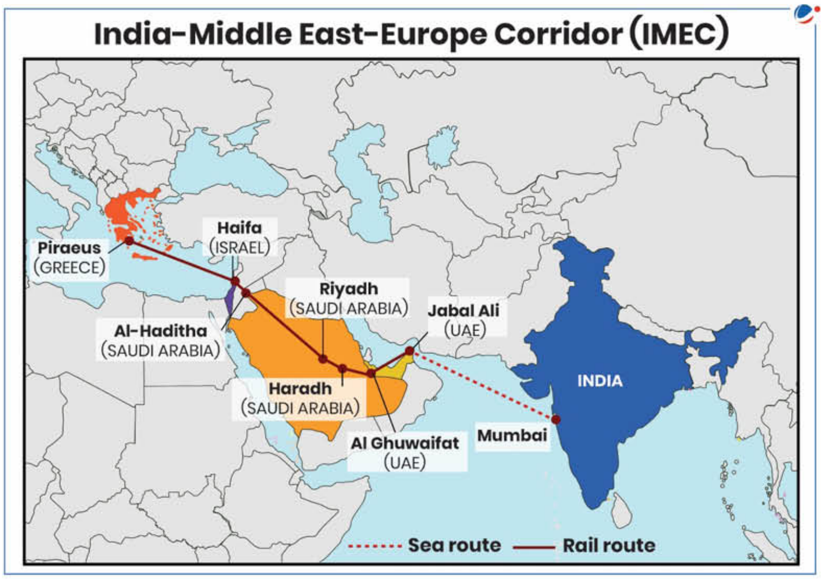
Let's take a Question: Discuss the strategic and geo-economic significance of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) for India. What are the key challenges in its successful implementation amidst the current regional geopolitics?

Answer Framework: This document enables you to answer such statement-based questions with ease and precision using targeted IR vocabulary. For instance:

INTRODUCTION CAN BE ADDED FROM HERE:

About IMEC

- A multi-modal connectivity project, formalized by an MoU signed between **India, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the US** at the G20 Summit (2023) in New Delhi.
- **Objective:** Developing infrastructure of ports, railways, roads, sea lines and pipelines to enhance trade between India, the Arabian Peninsula, the Mediterranean region, and Europe.



VALUE ADDITION FROM THE MAP

- **Two Key Corridors:**
  - The **East Corridor** connects India to the Arabian Gulf (linking South Asia and the Middle East).
  - **The North Corridor** extends from the Gulf to European markets.

Body Part 1 – From Here:

Significance of IMEC for India

- **Trade Route Diversification:** IMEC diversifies India–EU connectivity by reducing dependence on the Suez Canal.
  - E.g., Houthi attacks on commercial shipping led to the Red Sea crisis of 2023-24
- **Lower Logistics Cost and Time:** IMEC is expected to reduce transit time by up to **40%** and logistics costs by around **30%,** helping exporters avoid delays.
- **Port Optimization:** It promises higher throughput for **India's west coast ports** (like Mumbai and Mundra) by integrating them more deeply into **Mediterranean and Gulf logistics** ecosystems.
- **Upgradation in Global Value Chains:** Improved connectivity with Europe enables India to move from low-value assembly to higher-value manufacturing and services.

Body Part 2 – From Here:

Challenges to overcome for India

- **Escalation of Iran- Israel War:** It has intensified into a broader regional war, threatening IMEC's proposed transport corridors.

- **Trade Route Disruption: Strategic chokepoints (Strait of Hormuz)** have triggered spikes in oil prices and shipping risks, **undermining IMEC's economic feasibility**.
- **Breakdown of Regional Cooperation:** Strained critical diplomatic ties between Israel and Arab nations, stalling coordinated infrastructure development.
- **Port Capacity Mismatches:** E.g., while the Jebel Ali port in the UAE can handle 90 million tonnes annually, Haifa port in Israel is limited to approximately 30 million tonnes.
- **Financing Gaps:** IMEC spans multiple countries with uneven fiscal capacities and credit profiles, making it difficult to secure traditional public funding.

WAY FORWARD/CONCLUSION FROM HERE:

Conclusion

To succeed, the IMEC requires a sophisticated financing structure that combines public investment, sovereign wealth capital, and multilateral guarantees.

Q.4 WHAT MAKES IT 'EXAM-READY'?

- **GS-II-Aligned Structure:** Each chapter maps directly to syllabus heads—India & Neighbourhood, Bilateral/Global Groupings, Effect of Policies of Developed & Developing Countries, and International Institutions.
- **Ready-to-Quote Facts & Terminology:** Provides essential IR keywords like Strategic Autonomy, Multi-alignment, Complex Interdependence, String of Pearls, and Debt-Trap Diplomacy to elevate the scholarly tone of your answers.
- **Coverage of Blind Spots:** Addresses low frequency but emerging potential areas like India's Space diplomacy and systemic critiques of global governance (like the UN reforms).

Q.5 WHAT'S THE LAST-MILE BENEFIT IN THE EXAM HALL?

When others are trying to recall scattered editorial opinions to decipher a complex quote, you will already be structuring your 150/250-word answers. This document provides pre-packaged points for "critically analyze" and "elucidate" directives, built not just for syllabus coverage, but for rapid retention, instant recall, and razor-sharp delivery under time pressure.

Final Word

Treat this document as your answer bank. Use it to enrich your notes, simulate PYQ responses, and visualize your answers in the formal, strategic language that UPSC examiners reward. Remember, when robust conceptual content meets clarity and current geopolitical context, high marks follow.

> *"In international relations, success lies not merely in responding to change, but in shaping it."*

1. DYNAMICS OF CHANGING WORLD ORDER

1.1. FAIR AND REPRESENTATIVE GLOBAL ORDER

Why in the News?

India's External Affairs Minister urged for a fair and representative global order at the first BIMSTEC Traditional Music Festival.

Why global order is not fair and representative?

- **Unequal Representation in Institutions**: P5 nations dominate UNSC with veto, sidelining others.
- **Institutional biases and double standards:** The West's **severe reaction to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine** (e.g., SWIFT sanctions, Olympic bans) stands in sharp contrast to its **continued engagement with Israel** despite high civilian casualties in Gaza.
- **Marginalization of Global South**: Global North has **9× voting power** in IMF.
    - US holds **16.49% votes but only 4.22% of population.**
- **Ineffective Multilateralism:** Major Powers bypass forums (**e.g., US exit from Paris Pact & WHO).**
- **Trade as Geopolitical Tool: US tariffs** on Indian goods**, EU carbon tax** show imbalance.
- **Climate Change Inequities**: Developed nations caused **bulk emissions, but Global South suffers** most. **E.g., 2025-2026 Chilean wildfires** (burning 193% more area than the previous season).
- **Technology & Knowledge Divide**: 100 firms (**mainly US, China) drive 40% of global R&D**, centralising power.

Way forward for a Fair & Representative Global Order

- **Inclusive Multilateralism:** G4 nations (Brazil, Germany, India, Japan) **back each other's bids for UNSC** permanent seats.
    - Strengthen groupings like **G20**, **BRICS**, **IBSA**, etc**.** and allow **consensus-based** decision making.
- **Decolonising Multilateralism:** Voice of the **Global South Summit highlights India's role** in pushing equitable world order.
- **Implement Rio Declaration:** BRICS **(17th Summit) called for inclusive AI governance** and realignment of IMF quotas.
- **Bridging Digital & Tech Divide**: Promote open-source, **inclusive DPI.**
    - **India's Digital Public Infrastructure** showcased as a model for Global South.
- **Climate Justice:** Reinforce **CBDR principle,** updated for today's **climate and economic realities.**
- **Plurilateralism**: Minilateral groups (e.g., I2U2, IMEC) as complements to multilateralism.

Conclusion

A truly representative global order cannot emerge from institutions designed for the power realities of 1945; it requires redistributing voice, responsibility, and opportunity to reflect the realities of the twenty-first century.

1.1.1. RISE OF GLOBAL SOUTH SHAPING NEW WORLD ORDER

Why in the News?

Indian Prime Minister highlighted that the **World Order** created after **World War II (WWII)** is changing rapidly, driven by the rise of the Global South.

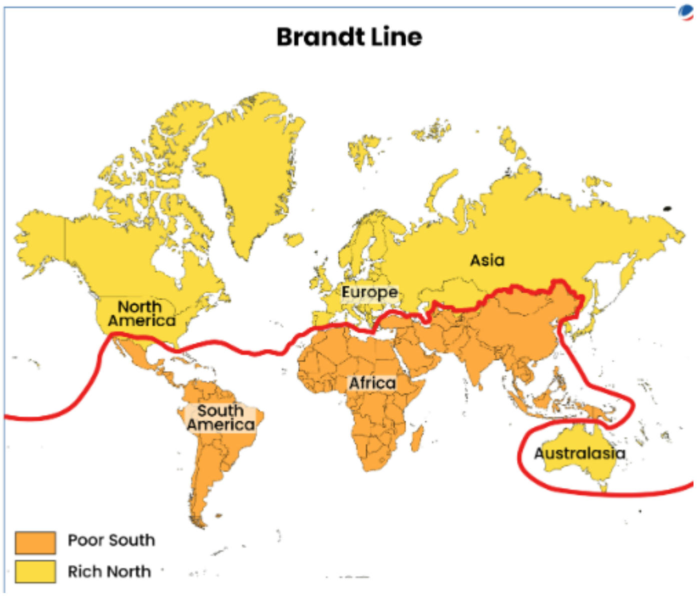
More on the News

- Post-World **WWII**, global power dynamics became **bipolar**, dominated by the **USA** and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (**USSR)** or **Soviet Union**.
- However, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the **United States** remained the sole superpower, marking the beginning of a unipolar world order.

What is Global South?

- It refers to **technically and socially less developed countries** which are located in the **Southern Hemisphere,** primarily in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.
- **Brandt Report** proposed a division between North and South countries based on various parameters such as technological advancement, GDP etc.

How is the rise of the Global South reshaping the World Order?



- **Multilateral Reforms: Advocates for reform of global governance institutions** like UN Security Council, World Bank, WTO for a fairer and more equitable world order.
- **Economic Growth**: Global South accounts for **more than 40% of world trade. (UNCTAD)**.
- **"Critical Minerals" Lever:** The Global South (**e.g., Latin American "Lithium Triangle", DRC's cobalt**) dominates supply for the green transition. This gives them the **leverage to demand domestic value-addition** rather than merely exporting raw materials.
- **Strengthening Alternative Institutions**: E.g. **New Development Bank (NDB)** and **BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)**.
- **Assertive Diplomacy:** E.g. establishment of the **loss and damage fund** at COP27
    - Countries are also pushing for reforms in United Nations and other global organisations (E.g. G77).
- **Demographic Strength**: Global South accounts for the majority of the world's population, with many nations experiencing a **demographic dividend**.
- **Other**: Vibrant South–South Cooperation, etc.

India's Engagement with the Global South

- **Economic Cooperation**: Expanded **trade and investments** with **Africa and Latin America**, especially in telecom, pharmaceuticals, and other key sectors.
    - **E.g.** generic medicines to over 50 African nations.
- **Development Assistance**: Focus on infrastructure projects, lines of credit, capacity building, and technical support.
    - **E.g. Pan-African e-Network** (now called **e-VidyaBharati AarogyaBharati (e-VBAB) Network Project**) for telemedicine and education.
- **Multilateral Engagements**: Leadership in initiatives like the **International Solar Alliance, Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure**, and forums such as the India-Africa Forum Summit.
- **Diplomatic Bridge**: Strategic autonomy enabling India to engage **both the West and Global South**, bridging gaps on climate change, trade, and security issues.
    - **E.g.** inclusion of African Union in G20 under India's leadership.
- **Intellectual Leadership:** PM Modi proposed **DAKSHIN (Global South Centre of Excellence) during the Voice of Global South Summits** to act as a **knowledge repository and think tank** for developing nations.

Challenges and Criticism

- Criticisms of "Global South" as a **vague or contested term.**
- **Fragmented interests** within Global South (e.g., China/India vs. LDCs).
- Risks like **debt distress** (esp. after COVID-19).
- **Geopolitical tensions** (e.g., some countries balancing US/China), and
- **Implementation gaps** in reforms.

India's Development Cooperation Model: A Distinct Alternative to Conventional Aid

- India's development model seeks to blend **local ownership with global credibility**, defining a new approach to **South-South Cooperation** that looks beyond aid dependency.

Features of India's development cooperation model

- **Demand-Driven Approach:** Proposals originate from partner governments e.g. **India-UN Development Partnership Fund.**
    - The fund was established in 2017 **under the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC).**
- **Capacity-Building Focus:** It includes training local personnel, strengthening institutions, and facilitating technology transfer.
    - E.g. the **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)** Programme of the Ministry of External Affairs has trained officials from 160+ countries.
- **Prioritizing Vulnerable States:** E.g. Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States.
    - **E.g. Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme (IDEAS)** provides lines of credit through Export-Import Bank of India to developing African and non-African countries.
- **Blending Local Ownership and Multilateral Credibility**: By partnering with the UN, execution is transparent, insulating the initiatives from bilateral political dynamics.
    - **E.g. India-UN Global Capacity-Building Initiative**, under the ministry of external affairs.
- **Other features**: Respecting sovereignty, cost-effective solution, Non-Conditional Support e.g. vaccine maitri, etc.

To further strengthen its cooperation model, India may enhance:

- **Transparency and Monitoring:** Establishing a **real-time results dashboard** that consolidates outputs and outcomes.
- **Inclusive partnerships:** Involving **local actors,** e.g. civil society, private sector, women-led enterprises, indigenous people etc.
- **Conduct Periodic Evaluations**: To ensure the model remains adaptable to evolving global challenges. E.g. climate change, political change in country, etc.

Conclusion

Echoing the vision of former **UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan** that **"Globalization must work for all,"** the rise of the Global South offers an opportunity to build institutions and partnerships that reflect the aspirations of the majority of humanity, making global governance more just, representative, and effective.

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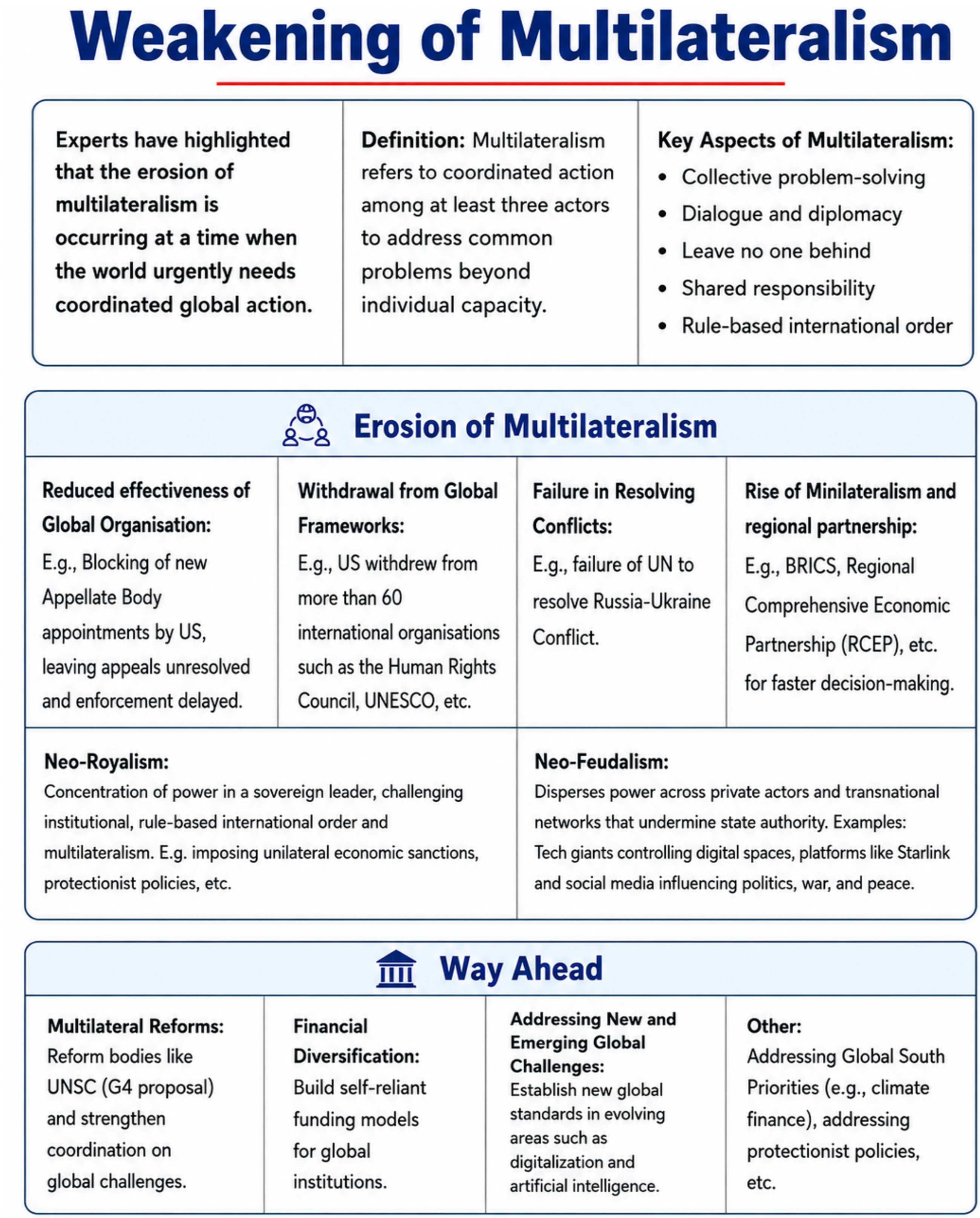
1.2. MULTILATERALISM

1.2.1. WEAKENING OF MULTILATERALISM AT A GLANCE



Weakening of Multilateralism

Experts have highlighted that the erosion of multilateralism is occurring at a time when the world urgently needs coordinated global action.

Definition: Multilateralism refers to coordinated action among at least three actors to address common problems beyond individual capacity.

Key Aspects of Multilateralism:

- Collective problem-solving
- Dialogue and diplomacy
- Leave no one behind
- Shared responsibility
- Rule-based international order

Erosion of Multilateralism

Reduced effectiveness of Global Organisation: E.g., Blocking of new Appellate Body appointments by US, leaving appeals unresolved and enforcement delayed.

Withdrawal from Global Frameworks: E.g., US withdrew from more than 60 international organisations such as the Human Rights Council, UNESCO, etc.

Failure in Resolving Conflicts: E.g., failure of UN to resolve Russia-Ukraine Conflict.

Rise of Minilateralism and regional partnership: E.g., BRICS, Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), etc. for faster decision-making.

Neo-Royalism: Concentration of power in a sovereign leader, challenging institutional, rule-based international order and multilateralism. E.g. imposing unilateral economic sanctions, protectionist policies, etc.

Neo-Feudalism: Disperses power across private actors and transnational networks that undermine state authority. Examples: Tech giants controlling digital spaces, platforms like Starlink and social media influencing politics, war, and peace.

Way Ahead

Multilateral Reforms: Reform bodies like UNSC (G4 proposal) and strengthen coordination on global challenges.

Financial Diversification: Build self-reliant funding models for global institutions.

Addressing New and Emerging Global Challenges: Establish new global standards in evolving areas such as digitalization and artificial intelligence.

Other: Addressing Global South Priorities (e.g., climate finance), addressing protectionist policies, etc.

1.2.2. US WITHDRAWAL FROM INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Why in the news?

The U.S. President signed a memorandum to **end participation and funding for 66** (**35 non-UN and 31 UN) organizations.**

Important Organizations from which the USA is withdrawing

- **Climate, Environment, and Energy:** UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC); International Solar Alliance (ISA) etc.
- **Health and Gender Equality:** World Health Organization (WHO) UN Women etc.
- **Peace, Security, and Development:** United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC); Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Fund; Global Counterterrorism Forum etc.

Reasons for the US withdrawal from international organizations

- "**America First**": Shift to **national interest, reducing support** to bodies like UNFCCC/IPCC.
- **Ideological Gaps**: Exit from UNESCO over bias and "**globalist" agenda.**
- **Sovereignty Concerns**: Fear of external influence on domestic policies.
- **Economic Interests**: Resistance to climate rules **affecting fossil fuels**.
- **Cutting Costs**: Claims of **overspending on inefficient bodies**; e.g., USAID ~$44B (~42% global aid).

Potential Impact of US withdrawal on multilateral organizations

- **Fragmented Multilateralism:** Shifting global governance from universal rules **toward transactional, ad-hoc, and regional blocs.**
- **China's Ascendance**: U.S. retreat may allow China to expand influence in **UN bodies.**
- **Humanitarian & Health Crises**: Aid cuts could cause 22 million **preventable deaths by 2030 (The Lancet**).
- **Weakened Budgets**: UN and WHO funding declines, **reducing humanitarian and development programs**.
- **Risks of Uneven Standards**: Shift from global rules to **ad-hoc arrangements** in tech, health, environment, etc.
- **Others**: Climate action slowdown, **Need to Push for UN reforms**.

Way forward

- **Multilateral Reforms**: Reform bodies like **UNSC (G4 proposal) and strengthen coordination on global challenges.**
- **Financial Diversification**: Build self-reliant funding **models for global institutions**.
- **South-South Cooperation**: Initiatives like the **International Solar Alliance strengthen** collaboration.
- **Others**: National resilience, diversified alliances, etc.

Conclusion

Although the US retreat triggers uncertainty, this systemic crisis presents a profound **opportunity for multilateral reform.** By championing regional autonomy, building national resilience, and diversifying alliances, the international community can forge highly effective global governance.

1.2.3. THIRD PATH FRAMEWORK FOR A REFORMED MULTILATERALISM

Why in the News?

Canadian PM Mark Carney in his speech at World Economic Forum in January, 2026 outlined a **new agenda** for the world i.e. - **"Third Path"** amid US-China rivalry and fading Rule based world order.

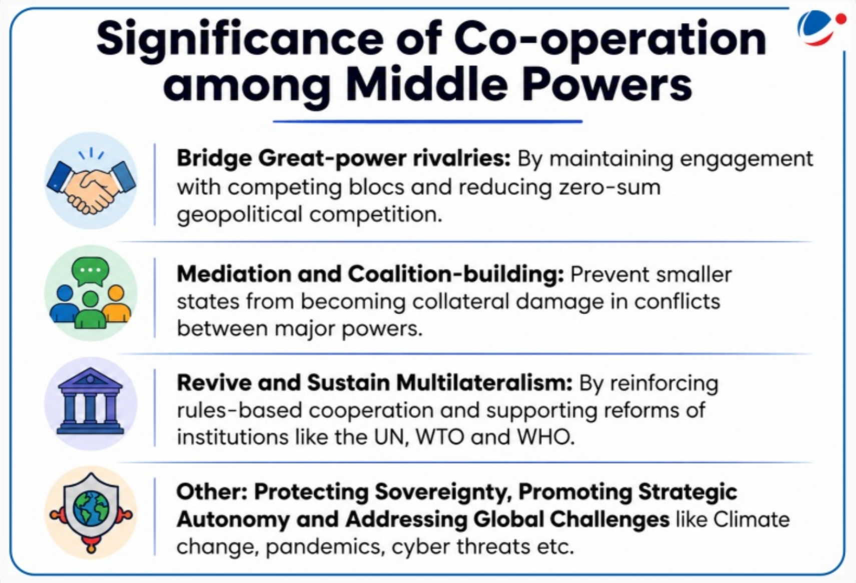
About Third path or Carney doctrine:

- **Core Idea**:
    - **Middle-power** cooperation**.**

  - **Value-based realism**: Supports sovereignty, territorial integrity with pragmatic national interests.
  - **Variable geometry**: Issue-based coalitions among like-minded states (e.g., G7, Schengen, Quad).
- This third path framework is **relevant for** other middle powers, including and particularly **India.**

What are Middle Powers?

- **Great powers** are often defined as countries with a permanent seat on UNSC **(i.e. China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States).**
  - These countries exert economic, political and military dominance over the world.
- Middle powers are **states below great powers** that do not dominate the international system but **possess significant diplomatic, economic, technological or normative influence.**
  - **Examples** include India, Canada, Australia, Japan, etc.



Significance of Co-operation among Middle Powers

Bridge Great-power rivalries: By maintaining engagement with competing blocs and reducing zero-sum geopolitical competition.

Mediation and Coalition-building: Prevent smaller states from becoming collateral damage in conflicts between major powers.

Revive and Sustain Multilateralism: By reinforcing rules-based cooperation and supporting reforms of institutions like the UN, WTO and WHO.

Other: Protecting Sovereignty, Promoting Strategic Autonomy and Addressing Global Challenges like Climate change, pandemics, cyber threats etc.

Conclusion

In an era where nations increasingly seek "**many partners, not one patron**," the Third Path reflects the growing agency of middle powers. For India, this doctrine complements its **role as a Vishwamitra** and a **leading voice of the Global South**, reinforcing the idea that the future world order will be shaped not only by great powers, but also by responsible middle powers working collectively.

1.2.4. OTHER ASPECTS OF MULTILATERALISM IN NEWS

1.2.4.1. MULTILATERALISM IN CLIMATE ACTION

Why in the News?

The 17th Petersberg Climate Dialogue (PCD) sought to reaffirm commitment to multilateral climate action amid rising geopolitical tensions.

Role of Multilateralism in Climate Action

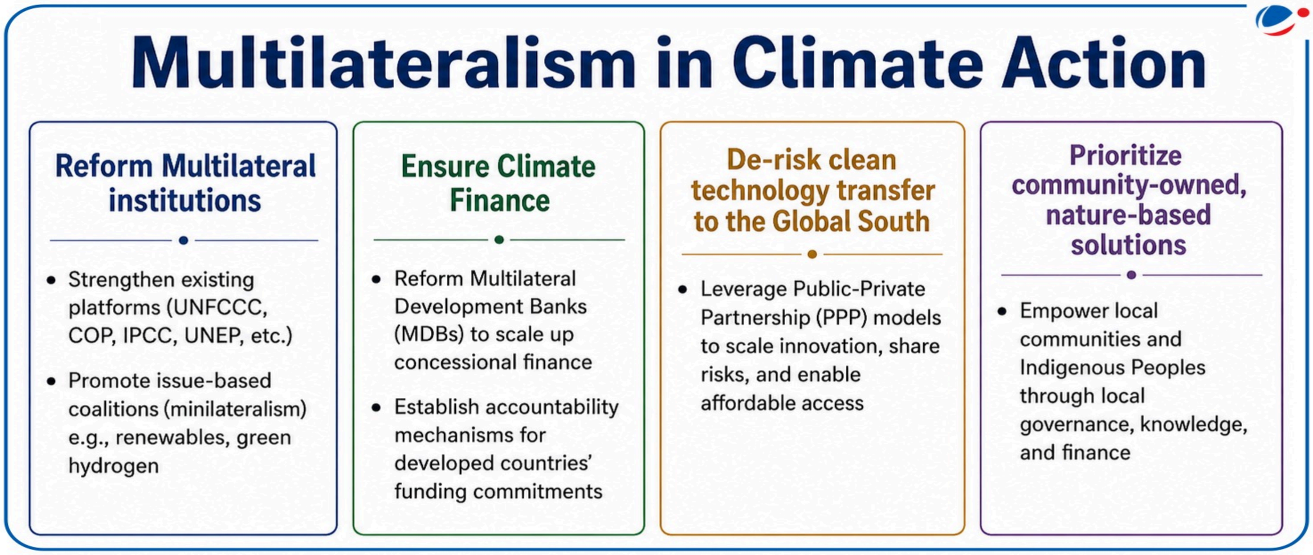
- **Climate as a Global Public Good**: Climate change as a **transboundary threat** transcends national capacities due to its dispersed costs and benefits.
- **Collective Governance:** Establishes a **rule-based order** for sharing global responsibilities, preventing unilateralism and ensuring **coordinated climate action**. E.g. NDCs
- **Negotiation Platforms**: International frameworks like the **UNFCCC, UNCBD, and UNCCD** facilitate the development of adaptation and mitigation strategies.
- **Upholding Climate Justice:** Protects **distributive equity** by institutionalizing the principle of **Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)**, acknowledging varying national capacities and historical emissions.
- **Mobilizing Financial Mechanisms:** E.g. through institutions like the **Global Environment Facility (GEF)** and **Green Climate Fund (GCF)**.

Challenges

- **Decision-Making Paralysis:** E.g. Consensus-based model of UNFCCC

- **Financial Constraints:** Developed countries have **failed to mobilize** the promised **$100 billion annually.**
- **Geopolitical Fragmentation:** Rising unilateralism undermines the stability and continuity of international climate law. **E.g. US withdrawal** from key climate bodies.
- **Others:** Asymmetric Agenda Setting favouring developed nations, Technology Protectionism (restricted tech transfer) etc.

Way Forward



Multilateralism in Climate Action

Reform Multilateral institutions

- Strengthen existing platforms (UNFCCC, COP, IPCC, UNEP, etc.)
- Promote issue-based coalitions (minilateralism) e.g., renewables, green hydrogen

Ensure Climate Finance

- Reform Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) to scale up concessional finance
- Establish accountability mechanisms for developed countries' funding commitments

De-risk clean technology transfer to the Global South

- Leverage Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models to scale innovation, share risks, and enable affordable access

Prioritize community-owned, nature-based solutions

- Empower local communities and Indigenous Peoples through local governance, knowledge, and finance

Conclusion

Upholding **climate justice, fulfilling funding commitments, and respecting the CBDR principle** within frameworks like the UNFCCC are imperative to forge a unified, effective global response against climate change.

1.2.4.2. MULTILATERALISM IN OUTER SPACE GOVERNANCE

Why in the News?

Recently launched **Artemis II Mission** to Moon and related **'Space Race'** have reignited the debate around the Outer Space Governance.

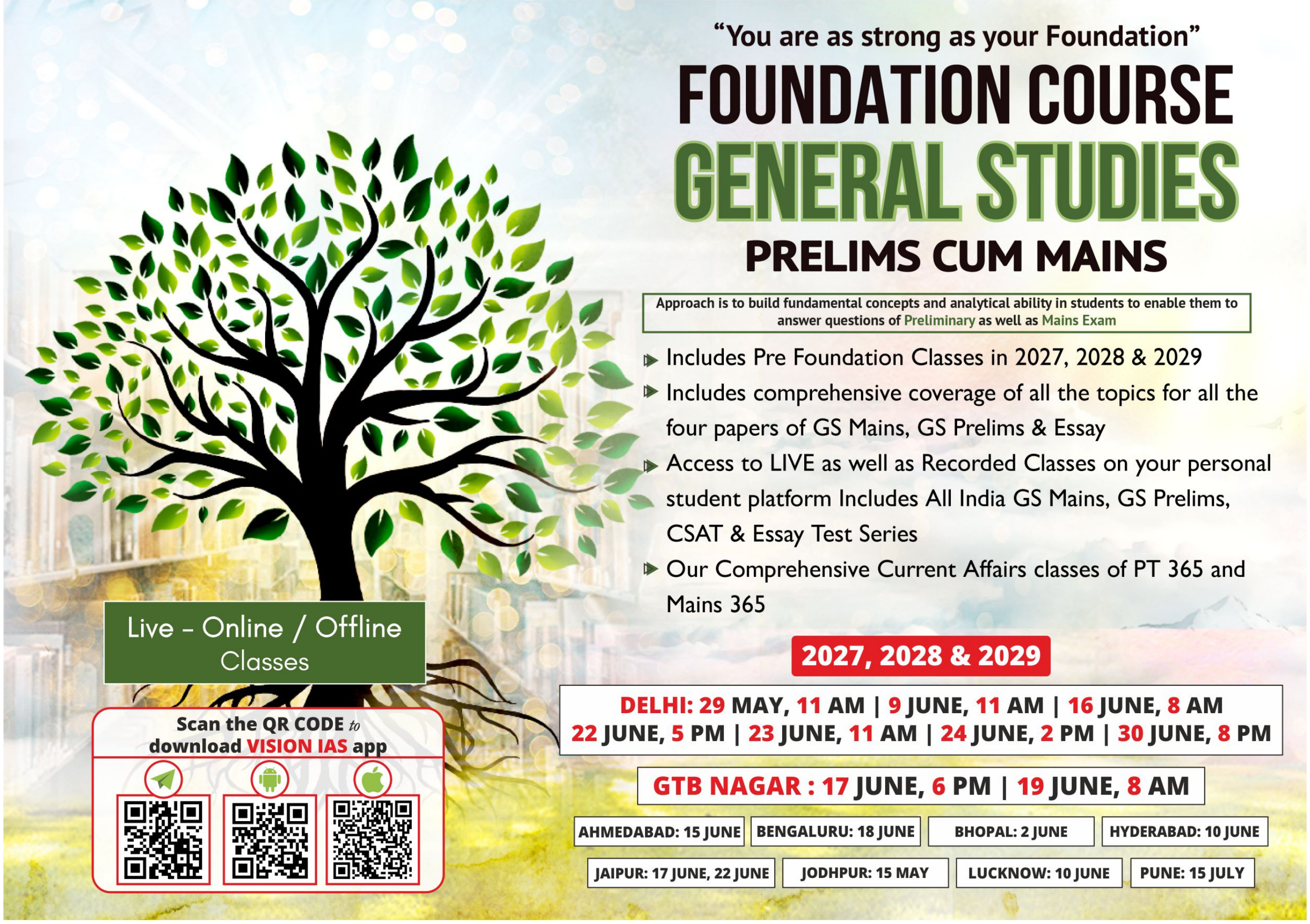
Need for Multilateralism in Outer Space Governance

- **Limitations of Existing Frameworks:** Outer Space Treaty (**OST)** lacks detailed regulatory code for **private** sector (although they are responsibility of States); potentially **weak enforcement** mechanism.
- **Space Resource Exploitation:** E.g. The **Artemis** Accords propose **"safety zones"** to avoid **"harmful interference"** which may act as exclusion zones, letting early nations **control** lunar resources.
- **Threat of Militarization:** Use of **dual-use technologies** heightens **strategic distrust**.
- **Geopolitical Fragmentation:** Outer Space is seeing a transition from **space exploration to sustained presence**, which necessitates a **rules-based order** to **prevent de facto sovereignty and conflict**.
    - E.g. US-led **Artemis** and China-led **International Lunar Research Station (ILRS)**

Present System of Outer Space Governance

Framework	Key Details of the Framework
Outer Space Treaty (1967)	• A **legally binding** international agreement under the **United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA).** • **Objectives:** Governing space exploration, establishing that outer space is free for all nations, cannot be claimed by any country, and prohibits placing nuclear weapons in orbit. • India has **ratified** the OST.

UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) (1959)	• Set up by the **UN General Assembly** to govern the exploration and use of space for **the benefit of all humanity.** • **Objective:** Aims to increase **coherence and synergy in international cooperation** in space activities at all levels (international, national and regional) • **Members:** 110 (**India** is a founding member)
Artemis Accords (2020)	• A **U.S.-led multilateral agreement** guiding peaceful, transparent, and interoperable space exploration, ensuring responsible behavior on the Moon and beyond. • **Objectives:** It provides a **common set of principles** to enhance **governance of civil exploration and use of outer space**, promoting **resource extraction rights** etc. • **Key Principles:** Transparency, Interoperability, Scientific Data Sharing. • **Members:** 67 as of May, 2026 (**India** is a signatory)



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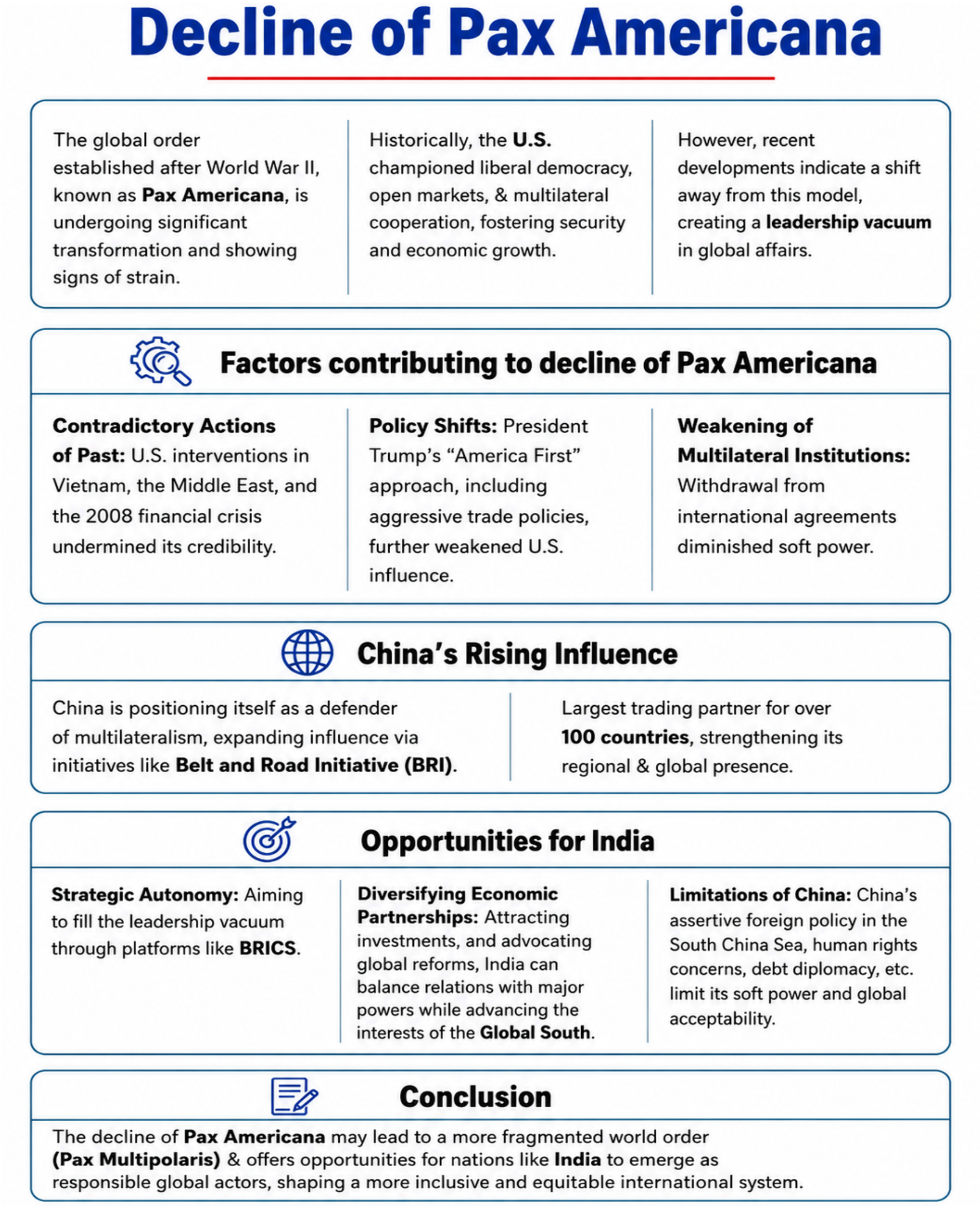
1.3. PAX AMERICANA

1.3.1. DECLINE OF PAX AMERICANA AT A GLANCE



Decline of Pax Americana

The global order established after World War II, known as **Pax Americana**, is undergoing significant transformation and showing signs of strain.

Historically, the **U.S.** championed liberal democracy, open markets, & multilateral cooperation, fostering security and economic growth.

However, recent developments indicate a shift away from this model, creating a **leadership vacuum** in global affairs.

Factors contributing to decline of Pax Americana

Contradictory Actions of Past: U.S. interventions in Vietnam, the Middle East, and the 2008 financial crisis undermined its credibility.

Policy Shifts: President Trump's "America First" approach, including aggressive trade policies, further weakened U.S. influence.

Weakening of Multilateral Institutions: Withdrawal from international agreements diminished soft power.

China's Rising Influence

China is positioning itself as a defender of multilateralism, expanding influence via initiatives like **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.

Largest trading partner for over **100 countries**, strengthening its regional & global presence.

Opportunities for India

Strategic Autonomy: Aiming to fill the leadership vacuum through platforms like **BRICS**.

Diversifying Economic Partnerships: Attracting investments, and advocating global reforms, India can balance relations with major powers while advancing the interests of the **Global South**.

Limitations of China: China's assertive foreign policy in the South China Sea, human rights concerns, debt diplomacy, etc. limit its soft power and global acceptability.

Conclusion

The decline of **Pax Americana** may lead to a more fragmented world order **(Pax Multipolaris)** & offers opportunities for nations like **India** to emerge as responsible global actors, shaping a more inclusive and equitable international system.

1.3.2. G2

Why in the News?

At the 2025 APEC Summit in South Korea, the **US President called** his **meeting with the Chinese President a "G2" engagement,** signaling a US-China duopoly in global affairs.

Background of the Meeting

- It was **held amid an escalating US-China trade war** which resulted in a temporary trade truce: **lower US tariffs on China and relaxed Chinese rare-earth exports to the US.**
- **G2 (Group of Two) r**ecognizes China's **great-power status and envisions US-China responsibility** for global issues like macroeconomic stability and climate, **dividing world into two spheres of influence**.

Implications of G-2 duopoly

- **Global Bipolarity & Strategic Realignment:** Acknowledges **China as near equal to the US (Decline of Pax Amreicana),** sidelining EU, Russia, India, Japan, etc.
- **Economic Leverage for China**: Rare-earth exports **strengthen China's bargaining power.**
- **Eroding Security Guarantees**: US allies fear reduced US presence in East Asia**, e.g., Taiwan.**
- **Strained India-US Relationship**: Adds uncertainty to **Indo-Pacific cooperation, e.g., Quad summit postponement** amid existing trade tensions.

Key Determinants Limiting G-2 Formation

- **Thucydides Trap**: The structural fear of being displaced forces both superpowers into a **zero-sum battle** for survival, destroying the mutual trust required to share global leadership.
- **Political and Ideological Differences:** US promotes a rules-based liberal order; China emphasizes sovereignty and state-led development.
- **Mutual Distrust and Rivalry**: Issues like **Taiwan, South China Sea disputes, trade wars,** and tech restrictions fuel suspicion, **preventing long-term partnership.**
- **China's Rejection of the Concept**: Prefers multilateral forums (UN, BRICS) to avoid **appearing subordinate to the US.**
- **Multipolar Alternatives:** Frameworks such as **RIC (Russia-India-China)** promote a multipolar world order, reducing the political appeal and legitimacy of a G-2 arrangement.

Way ahead for India

- **Preserve Strategic Autonomy: E.g.,** engagement in BRICS, QUAD.
- **Diversify Economic & Security Partnerships**: **E.g.,** FTAs with EU and others.
- **Deepen Collaboration**: Work with like-minded regional and global partners. **E.g., ASEAN.**
- **External Balancing by India:** E.g. deepening defense ties with **France** (Horizon 2047) and **Japan** (as Quad weakens), creating a "**Middle Power Coalition**" to resist the G2 duopoly.

Conclusion

While talk of a G2 signals the enduring weight of US–China relations, deep mistrust and ideological differences make a true duopoly unlikely. For India, the priority is to uphold strategic autonomy, expand diverse partnerships, and work with like-minded countries to strengthen a multipolar global order.

1.3.3. NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY 2025 OF THE USA

Why in the news?

The **Donald Trump administration** has released the **National Security Strategy 2025 (NSS 2025), a statutory document outlining U.S. foreign policy priorities** and strategic focus.

More on the News

- The strategy is centred around **economic nationalism, pursuit of core national interests** including sovereignty, homeland defence, self-reliance, etc.

- It marks a **major shift** from previous NSS focussing on **alliances, trade liberalisation, multilateralism, and rules-based international order**, etc.

Key features of NSS 2025

- **Monroe Doctrine Reasserted**: The **Western Hemisphere** is prioritised, **reaffirming U.S. dominance in Latin America and the Caribbean.**
  - The **1823 doctrine opposed European** interference in the region.
- **Security–Economy Link**: Emphasises **reindustrialisation, critical minerals, and energy dominance** through tariffs and reciprocal trade.
- **Ideological Shift**: Moves away from democracy promotion to **"civilizational pluralism," limiting intervention in other states' domestic politics.**
- **Asia's Role**: Asia is central to **U.S. interests, with continued emphasis** on a **free and open Indo-Pacific**.
- **Great Power Approach**: Russia and China **are no longer described** as existential threats.
- **"Golden Dome"**: Proposes a **homeland-focused missile defence system**, not extended collective defence.

Global Implications

- **Militarisation of Economic Geography:** Resource-rich regions like **Latin America and the Arctic are** treated as national security zones.
  - U.S. actions in **Venezuela (oil) and Greenland (rare earths, hydrocarbons) reflect this approach.**
- **Normalisation of Authoritarian Regimes**: NSS drops democracy **promotion and adopts a realist engagement with autocracies aligned with U.S. interests.**
  - This may benefit regimes like **Pakistan as human rights enforcement weakens**.
- **Threat to Rule-Based Order**: Strategic threats such as **annexing Greenland or the Panama** Canal undermine global norms.
  - **Article 2 of the UN Charter restricts** use of force except for **self-defence or UNSC authorisation.**
- **Weakening Multilateralism**: International organisations are **labelled as sovereignty-eroding, with preference for bilateral, interest-based ties.**
  - The U.S. has **withdrawn from 66 bodies,** including UNCTAD.
- **Reduced Aid to the Global South:** NSS avoids the term **Global South, prioritising domestic revival** and strategic aid allocation.
  - The U.S. still provides **about 30% of global development assistance.**
- **Spheres of Influence**: Focus on the **Western Hemisphere shifts regional security** responsibilities.
  - This creates space for **China's expanded role in Asia, the** Indo-Pacific, and **the Global South.**
- **Arms Race Risk**: Emphasis on **nuclear modernisation may intensify arms** competition and weaken disarmament efforts.

Implications for India	
Opportunities	**Challenges**
• **Closer Ties**: NSS supports stronger trade ties and recognises **India as a major power.** • **Tech Cooperation**: Promotes collaboration in **technology and critical minerals**. • **Indo-Pacific Role:** Reaffirms Quad and supports **India's free and open Indo-Pacific vision**. • **Strategic Autonomy: Non-interference** approach and potential **US-Russia détente** aligns **with India's foreign policy.**	• **Trade & Tech Pressure**: Use of tariffs, sanctions, and export controls; **India faces high U.S. tariffs and tech alignment pressure.** • **Security Burden**: Expectation that India lead **Indian Ocean security** without treaty guarantees. • **China Factor**: Softer U.S. stance on China may **reduce India's leverage**. • **Diplomatic Strain**: U.S. claims of mediating **India–Pakistan tensions rejected by India**.

Way ahead for India

India may cooperate with the U.S. in **technology, maritime security, and supply chains, while hedging risks by diversifying ties through the EU FTA and partnerships with Middle Powers** such as France, Germany, Japan, and Australia.

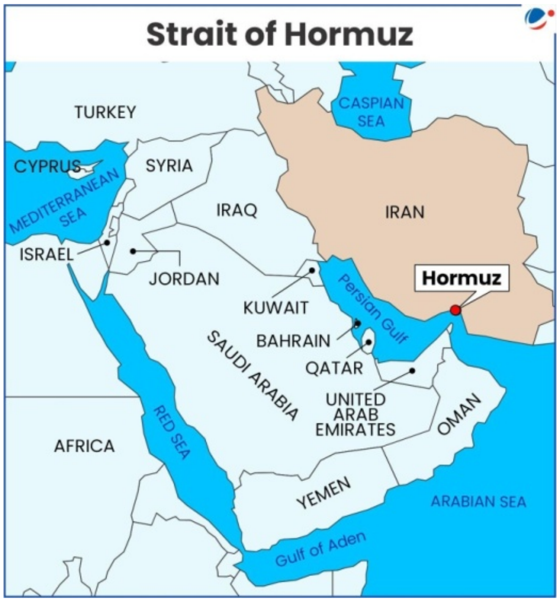
1.3.4. ISRAEL-US-IRAN WAR

Why in the news?

Israel and the US launched a joint attack on Iran amid a perceived decline in the global US hegemony.

More on the News

- **Timeline of the Conflict**
    - **June 2025 (Brief Conflict): Israel ("Operation Rising Lion") and the USA ("Operation Midnight Hammer")** launched major strikes against Iranian nuclear infrastructure and ballistic missile capability.
        - Iran launched **'Operation True Promise 3'** in retaliation.
    - **February 2026 (Full Scale War): Israel ("Operation Roaring Lion")** and the **US** ("**Operation Epic Fury")** launched coordinated military strikes on Iran**,** killing Iranian Supreme Leader **Ayatollah Ali Khamenei**.
        - **Iran retaliated** by attacking **U.S. bases in West Asian region**, **Israel**, and **energy infrastructure** in Gulf states and **closing down of the Strait of Hormuz**.
    - **June 2026 (MoU signed between US and Iran):** A **14-point temporary agreement** establishes:
        - An **immediate ceasefire**.
        - A **60-day window for final peace talks**.
        - Lifting of the US naval blockade and sanctions.
        - And a **$300 billion reconstruction fund** in exchange for **Iran freezing its nuclear program.**



- **International Conventions/Treaties governing the issue**
    - **UNSC Resolution 2817 (2026):** Condemned Iran's attacks and invoked **Article 51** (self-defence).
    - **UNCLOS:** Protects transit passage through international straits.

Key Reasons behind Iran-Israel Conflict

- **Historical reason:** Post-1979 Iranian Revolution, Iran turned into an Islamic Republic, adopted a hard **anti-Israel stance**.
- **Nuclear Concerns:** Iran's enrichment (around 60% as per IAEA) **breached JCPOA limits** after US withdrawal.
- **Iran's support to Proxy war:** Iran has backed groups like **Hezbollah** in **Lebanon** and **Hamas** in **Gaza**.
- **Geo-economic interests of US:** To maintain regional dominance, regime change, secure energy flows, and support Abraham Accords.

Implications of the Iran-Israel-US Conflict

Global Implications

- **Nuclear Tensions:** Iran may quit NPT.
- **Trade and Energy Risks: 20% of the world's oil** passes via **Strait of Hormuz**, a critical maritime chokepoint (both US & Iran blockade the Strait during the war).
    - Threat to **freedom of navigation** as Iran pushes for **'service fee'** post war.
- **Under-Sea Cable Disruptions in Red Sea:** Affects digital infrastructure, internet traffic between Asia, Europe and Middle East.

- **Power Vacuum:** Escalates instability in West Asia. E.g. Israel-Lebanon conflict and attacks on gulf countries by Iran.
- **Other: Human Cost (**Sharp HDI decline in Iran); **Environmental Cost (**Toxic pollution from bombed refineries); **Economic Cost (**global stagflation).

Implications for India

- **Trade Decline:** India's trade with Iran (**$14 billion in 2017 to $1.4 billion 2024**) and Israel (**$11 billion in 2022 to $3.75 billion in 2024)** has already significantly reduced due to sanctions and regional tensions.
- **Geopolitical Realignment**: Iran's fall could **shift West Asia from multipolarity to US-led unipolarity**, reducing space for **non-Western powers like India**.
- **Strategic Balancing:** India must navigate ties with both for **energy (~50% of India's oil via Strait of Hormuz)**, **defence**, and **connectivity (Longer route** for **ships and aeroplanes)**.
- **Project Disruptions**: **Chabahar** Port, **International North-South Transport Corridor (**INSTC), and **IMEC** face setbacks.
- **Diaspora Risk:** Risk to **10 million** Indian diaspora in Gulf with over 28,000 Indians in conflict zones, including a **large numbers of seafarers**.
- **Agriculture & Food:** West Asia supplies **over 45% of India's fertilizer imports**, and 85% of domestic urea production relies on **imported liquefied natural gas**.
- **Human Development:** The crisis could push nearly **2.5 million Indians into poverty**. Rising gas prices have led to **weakening of Indian Rupee** and forced a **shift to coal**, elevating **pollution and health risks**.

India's Measures

- Large-scale evacuation of nationals (**Operation Sindhu**).
- Proposed **Economic Stabilization Fund**.
- **Supply Chain Diversification:** Strategic Petroleum Reserve management and diversified LNG imports.
- **Agriculture:** Emergency fertilizers procurement from Russia, Morocco, Canada, etc.

UNDP Recommendations for India (for building Long-term Resilience amid West Asian War)

- **Reduce Structural Exposure:** Invest in **renewable energy**, **diversify input sources, and strengthen domestic food systems** to break the cycle of vulnerability to external global shocks.
- **Deepen Regional Cooperation:** The report recommends establishing **joint approaches to energy and food security** (such as diversified supply and stock management).
- **Strengthen Shock-Responsive Social Protection:** Transition from blanket subsidies to **targeted cash transfers** that reach informal workers, migrants, and women.
- **Protect Livelihoods and MSME Resilience:** Provide **concessional credit, guarantee mechanisms, and business continuity support** for small firms.

Conclusion

Driven by geopolitical and nuclear anxieties, the conflict has escalated into a regional war that **weaponized chokepoints** like the Strait of Hormuz and **exposed the severe fragility of global supply chains**. For India, these vulnerabilities demand a **long-term strategic reassessment** requiring India to accelerate its **green energy transition, permanently diversify critical supply chains beyond the volatile Persian Gulf.**

Other Geopolitical Maneuvers by the US to re-establish hegemony

- **Military intervention in Venezuela**
    - The U.S. launched military strikes in Caracas, resulting in the **capture of President Nicolás Maduro.**
    - **U.S. Justifications:** to target **narco-terrorism, drug trades, and crime** linked to the Maduro regime, alongside rejecting the disputed 2024 elections.
        - > **Strategic motivations** also include
            - ▪ Securing **control over Venezuela's massive oil reserves (roughly 17% of the global supply)**,

            - Opposing socialism, and countering the regional influence of Russia and China.
    - **Geopolitical Consequences:** Capturing a foreign president is viewed as a **breach of Article 2 of the UN Charter**, which risks severe regional destabilization and weakens multilateralism by bypassing the UN Security Council.
- **US Strategic claims over Greenland**
    - The U.S. has targeted Greenland (currently under Denmark), though it recently withdrew tariff threats to negotiate a cooperative framework with NATO.
    - **Why Greenland is Crucial:**
        - **Military & Strategic Value:**
            - Vital hub for **monitoring the North Atlantic maritime corridor** and hosts the **U.S. Pituffik Space base** for early-warning missile defense.
            - The **melting Arctic ice** has greatly intensified competition here between the U.S., Russia, and China.
        - **Resource Wealth:** The territory contains **massive reserves of rare earth minerals** (which could reduce U.S. dependence on China) and potential fossil fuels.
    - **De-escalation Efforts:** The dispute is currently being managed through **NATO mediation**, talks to revise the **1951 U.S.–Denmark defense agreement**, and the new NATO **"Arctic Sentry Mission"** to monitor the region.

Implications for the Global Order

- These unilateral actions highlight the **failure of the liberal order** and the **erosion of sovereignty**.

Way Ahead

- In response, **middle powers like India** must push for a **multipolar, rules-based world order**, including **UN reforms, emphasis on non-interference, respect for sovereignty, and peaceful dispute resolution.**

फाउंडेशन कोर्स
सामान्य अध्ययन
प्रारंभिक एवं मुख्य परीक्षा 2027
इनोवेटिव क्लासरूम प्रोग्राम

- प्रारंभिक परीक्षा, मुख्य परीक्षा और निबंध के लिए महत्वपूर्ण सभी टॉपिक का विस्तृत कवरेज
- मौलिक अवधारणाओं की समझ के विकास एवं विश्लेषणात्मक क्षमता निर्माण पर विशेष ध्यान
- एनीमेशन, पॉवर प्वाइंट, वीडियो जैसी तकनीकी सुविधाओं का प्रयोग
- अंतर - विषयक समझ विकसित करने का प्रयास
- योजनाबद्ध तैयारी हेतु करेंट ओरिएंटेड अप्रोच
- नियमित क्लास टेस्ट एवं व्यक्तिगत मूल्यांकन
- प्री फाउंडेशन कक्षाएं
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- निबंध टेस्ट सीरीज
- सीसैट टेस्ट सीरीज
- निबंध लेखन - शैली की कक्षाएं
- करेंट अफेयर्स मैगजीन

नोट: ऑनलाइन छात्र हमारे पाठ्यक्रम की लाइव वीडियो कक्षाएं अपने घर पर ऑनलाइन प्लेटफॉर्म पर देख सकते हैं। छात्र लाइव चैट विकल्प के माध्यम से कक्षा के दौरान अपने संदेह और विषय संबंधी प्रश्न पूछ सकते हैं। वे अपने संदेह और प्रश्न नोट भी कर सकते हैं और दिल्ली केंद्र में हमारे कक्षा सलाहकार को बता सकते हैं और हम फोन/मेल के माध्यम से प्रश्नों का उत्तर देंगे।

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1.4. GEO-ECONOMICS: THE NEW ARENA OF GEO-POLITICS

Geo-Economics At A Glance

India is facing challenges as the traditional boundaries of geopolitics are being redrawn by **geo-economics.**

Geopolitics: Power through traditional factors like geography and military.

Geo-economics: Use of **economic instruments** (trade, sanctions) to promote and defend **national interests** and produce **beneficial geopolitical results.**

How Geo-economics is shaping Geopolitics?

Critical Minerals Initiatives:
E.g. "Pax Silica" and "FORGE" initiatives (US), to secure supply chains for **semiconductors, AI,** and **critical minerals.**

Weaponization of Interdependence:
E.g. use of **financial sanctions** by the US like cutting off **Russian banks** from **SWIFT.**

Trade Policy as Strategic Tool:
E.g. **"Trade War"** between the **US** and **China**, involving technological supremacy (e.g. **semiconductors**).

Geo-economic Fragmentation:
E.g. EU's **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)** that shifts the burden of emission reductions onto the **Global South.**

India's Key Challenges in the Geo-economic Arena

High Import Dependence:
In **critical minerals, oil, gas, Battery parts**, etc. leave India vulnerable to global supply chain vulnerabilities. E.g. **Strait of Hormuz** crisis.

Low R&D & Tech Ecosystem:
India spends just about **0.6-0.7%** of its GDP on the **R&D Sector,** significantly lower than the **2.5–3%** spent by **China** and the **US.**

Policy & Governance Gaps:
Such as **bureaucratic red-tapism** which limits private sector participation and investment in **mineral exploration.**

Way Ahead for India

Forging More Geo-economic Partnerships:
Such as **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI)** with **Japan, Australia,** and **USA** and **Global Biofuels Alliance** to create a geo-economic alternative to traditional fossil fuel blocks like **OPEC.**

Ramping Up Innovation & R&D:
E.g. **Research Development** and **Innovation (RDI) Scheme.**

Critical Infrastructure & Connectivity: Fast tracking the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)** as a geo-economic bridge that secures India's **trade routes** and **energy interests.**

1.4.1. ENERGY SECURITY POLICY OF INDIA

Why in the News?

US–Israeli strikes on Iran have escalated into **wider regional conflict, disrupting global energy markets** calling for **Energy Security** in **India's Foreign Policy**.

Recent Developments Mandating Energy Security for India

- **Shift from Geopolitics to Geo-Economics:** E.g. USA's unilateral imposition of tariffs, etc.
- **Military Offensive creating Instability in Middle East: E.g.** threats to commercial vessels passing through **Strait of Hormuz.**
- **Rising Oil Inflation:** Global oil prices **surged more than 40-50%** amid fears of supply disruptions during US-Iran war.

Need for realigning India's Foreign Policy

- **Geographically Concentrated Import Dependency:** 85% crude oil, 50% natural gas, and 25% coal, largely from Gulf.
- **Supply Chain Disruption:** Nearly 50% of crude oil & over 60% of LNG/LPG shipments transit Strait of Hormuz; **Gas infrastructure** has limited buffers compared to oil.
- Energy disruptions directly impact **fertiliser prices, food inflation, and rural access to clean fuel.**

India's foreign policy initiatives for Energy Security

- **Leadership at Global Forums:** Biofuel Alliance, ISA; One Sun One World One Grid, etc.
- **Diversification:** Oil suppliers increased from 27 to 40 countries.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** Balanced imports from Russia, Middle East, and USA.
- **Overseas assets:** ONGC Videsh and other PSUs operate 48 assets in 22 countries.
- **Other: Alternate energy sources (**like National Green Hydrogen Mission); **Strategic Petroleum Reserves, etc.**

Conclusion

In an era where energy flows are increasingly shaped by geopolitical rivalries and conflict zones, India's foreign policy must evolve from securing energy supplies to building comprehensive energy resilience through diversification, strategic autonomy, and clean energy leadership.

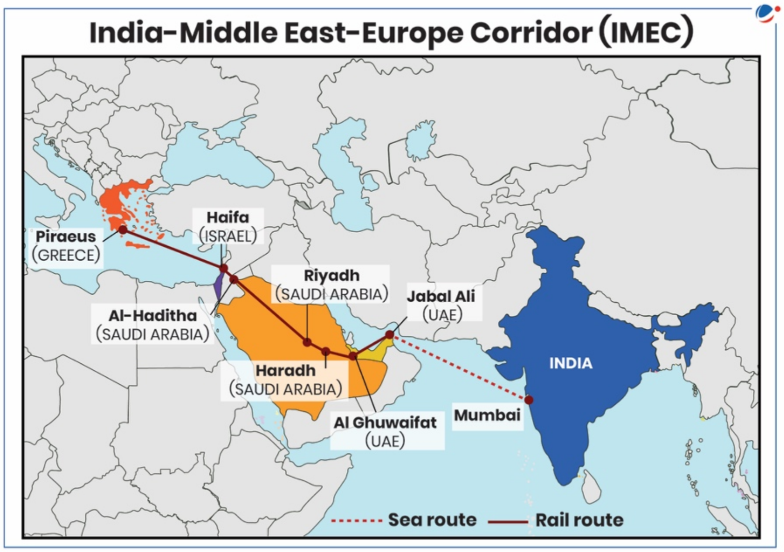
1.4.2. INDIA-MIDDLE EAST-EUROPE ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (IMEC)

Why in the News?

India sees IMEC as a **strategic Geo-economic imperative** amid the disruption in the global trade and supply chains.

About IMEC

- A multi-modal connectivity project, formalized by an MoU signed between **India, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the US** at the G20 Summit (2023) in New Delhi.
- **Objective:** Developing infrastructure of ports, railways, roads, sea lines and pipelines to enhance trade between India, the Arabian Peninsula, the Mediterranean region, and Europe.



- **Two Key Corridors:**
    - The **East Corridor** connects India to the Arabian Gulf (linking South Asia and the Middle East).
    - **The North Corridor** extends from the Gulf to European markets.

Significance of IMEC for India

- **Trade Route Diversification:** IMEC diversifies India–EU connectivity by reducing dependence on the Suez Canal.
    - E.g., Houthi attacks on commercial shipping led to the Red Sea crisis of 2023-24
- **Lower Logistics Cost and Time:** IMEC is expected to reduce transit time by up to **40%** and logistics costs by around **30%,** helping exporters avoid delays.
- **Port Optimization:** It promises higher throughput for **India's west coast ports** (like Mumbai and Mundra) by integrating them more deeply into **Mediterranean and Gulf logistics** ecosystems.
- **Upgradation in Global Value Chains:** Improved connectivity with Europe enables India to move from low-value assembly to higher-value manufacturing and services.

Challenges to overcome for India

- **Escalation of Iran- Israel War:** It has intensified into a broader regional war, threatening IMEC's proposed transport corridors.
- **Trade Route Disruption: Strategic chokepoints (Strait of Hormuz)** have triggered spikes in oil prices and shipping risks, **undermining IMEC's economic feasibility**.
- **Breakdown of Regional Cooperation:** Strained critical diplomatic ties between Israel and Arab nations, stalling coordinated infrastructure development.
- **Port Capacity Mismatches:** E.g., while the Jebel Ali port in the UAE can handle 90 million tonnes annually, Haifa port in Israel is limited to approximately 30 million tonnes.
- **Financing Gaps:** IMEC spans multiple countries with uneven fiscal capacities and credit profiles, making it difficult to secure traditional public funding.

Conclusion

To succeed, the IMEC requires a sophisticated financing structure that combines public investment, sovereign wealth capital, and multilateral guarantees.

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1.4.3. MARITIME CHOKEPOINTS AT A GLANCE

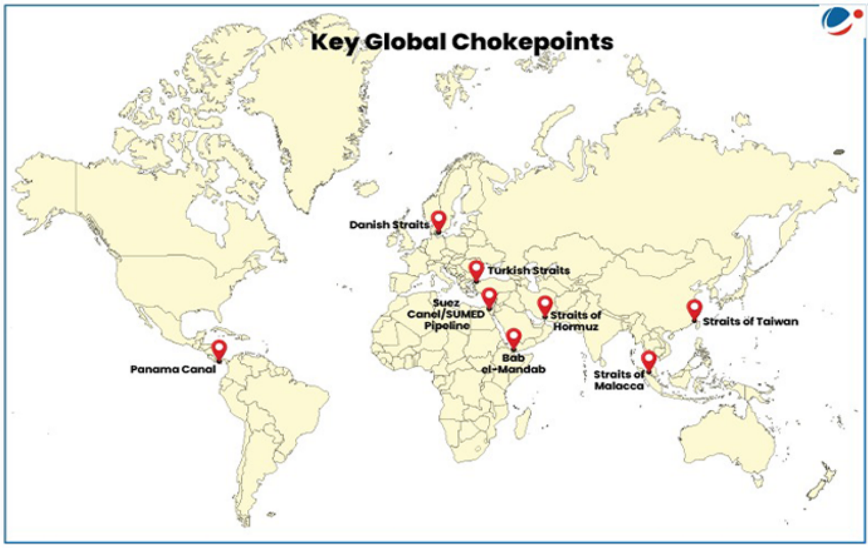
Maritime Chokepoints

Chokepoints are narrow, strategically important maritime passages crucial for global trade.

Vulnerability of global chokepoints has become apparent due to **blockade of Strait of Hormuz** during the West Asia War.

Institutional Architecture Governing Freedom of Navigation in International Waters: **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS):** Defines maritime zones, Global Commons, Freedom of navigation, resource rights, and dispute resolution.

Key Global Chokepoints



- **Turkish Straits** (Bosphorus and Dardanelles).
- **Strait of Hormuz** (20% of global oil and LNG supplies).
- **Bab el-Mandeb** (12% of global trade flows).
- **Strait of Malacca** (~40% of global trade and 80% of China's oil imports).
- **Strait of Taiwan** (20% of annual global maritime trade by value).

Significance of chokepoints

Trade and Energy Arteries: Over two-thirds of seaborne energy trade depends on a few key chokepoints, such as Strait of Malacca and Strait of Hormuz.

Economic Impact: Disruptions at chokepoints fuel global inflation and disrupting import-dependent economies.

Geopolitical Flashpoints: vulnerable to military blockades, regional conflicts, and piracy.

Climate Change Risks: E.g. Drought in Panama Canal disrupting global supply chains.

Industrial and Digital risks: Chokepoints now include concentrated industrial and digital systems. E.g. More than 90% of Europe-Asia subsea cable capacity runs through the Red Sea cable corridor, making it a chokepoint for digital services.

Potential Solutions for India

- **Diversifying** energy sources and supply chains, scaling up renewable energy, exploring **alternative transportation routes.** E.g. India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC).
- **Strengthening military capabilities** to ensure freedom and openness of Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) in line with India's MAHASAGAR vision.

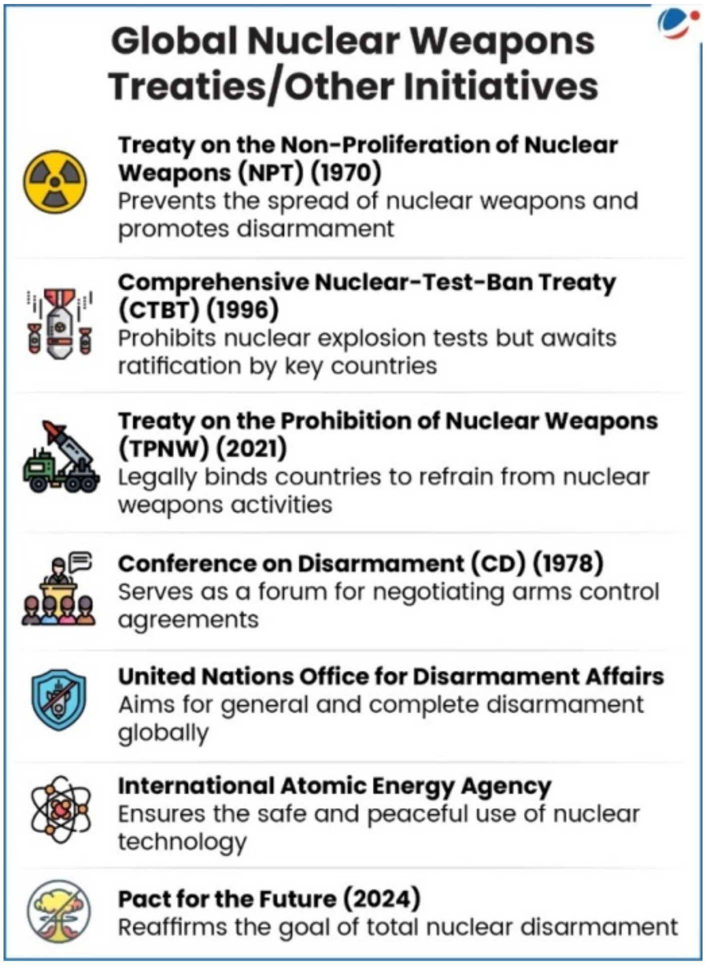
1.5. NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Why in the News?

The US President recently announced resuming **nuclear weapons testing, potentially undermining decades of non-proliferation and disarmament efforts.**

Factors behind Rising Nuclear Risk

- **Geopolitical tensions:** Conflicts push states toward nuclear readiness, e.g. **SIPRI 2026 Yearbook notes rising operational warheads (12 by India for first time)**.
- **Doctrinal ambiguity**: **e.g.** uncertain response to cyber-attacks on nuclear systems.
- **Treaty breakdown**: **e.g.** Fall of INF Treaty, US exit from Iran deal.
- **Faster delivery systems**: e.g. **hypersonic missiles** accelerate escalation potential.
- **False alarm risks**: Early-warning errors can trigger accidental conflict, e.g. **1983 Soviet false alarm**.
- **Space militarization**: Arms expansion into space adds instability**, e.g. U.S. Space Force growth.**
- **Weaponization of AI**: AI in military systems speeds decisions, **raising misinterpretation risk.**



Global Nuclear Weapons Treaties/Other Initiatives

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) (1970)
Prevents the spread of nuclear weapons and promotes disarmament

Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) (1996)
Prohibits nuclear explosion tests but awaits ratification by key countries

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) (2021)
Legally binds countries to refrain from nuclear weapons activities

Conference on Disarmament (CD) (1978)
Serves as a forum for negotiating arms control agreements

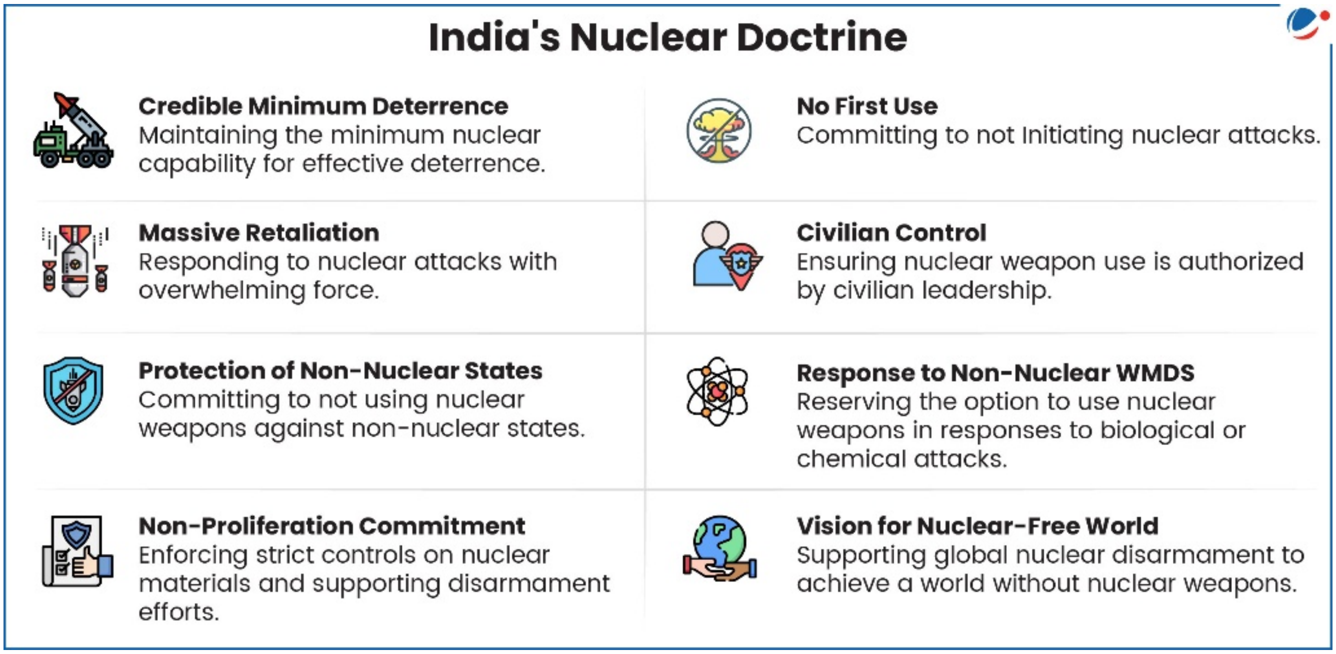
United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs
Aims for general and complete disarmament globally

International Atomic Energy Agency
Ensures the safe and peaceful use of nuclear technology

Pact for the Future (2024)
Reaffirms the goal of total nuclear disarmament

Nuclear Disarmament

- **Goal:** Reduce or eliminate nuclear weapons **globally via unilateral or international measures, aiming for a nuclear-free world.**
- **Key Issues**
    - **Ineffective Global Platforms:** Multilateral bodies show little progress, weakening trust. **E.g., Conference on Disarmament stagnates for decades.**
    - **Treaty Loopholes**: Ambiguous clauses delay or allow avoidance of commitments. **E.g., NPT lacks strict reduction timelines.**
        - **Exit from Agreements** (E.g., North Korea leaving NPT)**; States Outside the Framework** (E.g., India, Israel, Pakistan outside NPT).
- **Commitment–Implementation Gap**: **E.g.**, Russia supports NPT yet upgrades delivery systems.
- **Dependency on Nuclear Deterrence**: **E.g.,** Russia maintains nuclear deterrence against NATO.
- **Lack of Binding Rules for Delivery Systems**: No legal limits on **missile competition.**



India's Nuclear Doctrine

Credible Minimum Deterrence
Maintaining the minimum nuclear capability for effective deterrence.

No First Use
Committing to not Initiating nuclear attacks.

Massive Retaliation
Responding to nuclear attacks with overwhelming force.

Civilian Control
Ensuring nuclear weapon use is authorized by civilian leadership.

Protection of Non-Nuclear States
Committing to not using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states.

Response to Non-Nuclear WMDS
Reserving the option to use nuclear weapons in responses to biological or chemical attacks.

Non-Proliferation Commitment
Enforcing strict controls on nuclear materials and supporting disarmament efforts.

Vision for Nuclear-Free World
Supporting global nuclear disarmament to achieve a world without nuclear weapons.

India's Stand on Nuclear Disarmament

- **Core Principle**: Supports **global, non-discriminatory, verifiable disarmament** for all states.
- **First to Call for Test Ban:** In 1954, India urged a **worldwide nuclear test ban.**
- **Nuclear Ban Convention**: Proposed a **global convention in 1978** to prohibit **use or threat of nuclear weapons.**
- **Phased Disarmament Plan**: UNGA Action Plan in **1988 outlined three-phase nuclear elimination.**
- **Stand on Global Treaties**
  - **NPT:** Opposes as it **legitimizes nuclear weapons for only five states**.
  - **CTBT:** Not signed due to **disarmament gaps and security concerns.**
  - **TPNW**: Not supported as it lacks **new legal disarmament standards**.
- **Multilateral Approach:** Advocates negotiated universal agreements; **supports a Nuclear Weapons Convention via the Conference on Disarmament.**

Conclusion

Reducing nuclear risks requires renewed **arms control, transparency, and inclusive global cooperation.** India's commitment to **universal and verifiable disarmament**, coupled with restraint and confidence-building measures, offers a practical path toward a nuclear-weapon-free world.

1.5.1. INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA)

Why in News?

The IAEA remains central to global nuclear issues, including verification and reporting on Iran's nuclear programme.

About IAEA

- **Genesis:** IAEA, an **autonomous oragnisation of the UN,** founded in 1957 (India is a founding member).
- **Functions:** works on issues like **peaceful uses of nuclear energy, food safety, cancer control and sustainable development**.

Significance of IAEA in the Present Global Order

- **Preventing Nuclear Proliferation:** The IAEA acts as the **global "nuclear watchdog**."
  - It conducts **safeguards inspections, verifies compliance, and detects diversion of nuclear materials** for military use.

- **Promoting Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy:** for base-load electricity, **energy security**, and **decarbonization**.
    - It provides **technical assistance, training, and infrastructure development**, especially to countries in Africa and Asia.
- **Strengthening Nuclear Safety and Security:** IAEA develops international safety standards, conducts peer reviews, and builds emergency preparedness.
- **Role in Nuclear Diplomacy:** As a neutral technical body, the **IAEA builds confidence through verification** in high-stakes cases such as Iran (JCPOA), North Korea, and conflict-zone monitoring (e.g., Zaporizhzhia).

Challenges Facing the IAEA

- **Geopolitical Rivalries** limits enforcement (e.g., divisions over Iran, Ukraine).
- **Limited Powers:** Verification and reporting only; enforcement relies on UNSC/member states.
- **Emerging Technologies:** Regulating SMRs, advanced fuels, AI/cyber threats in nuclear systems, and naval propulsion programmes.
- **Nuclear Security Threats:** Terrorism, trafficking, and attacks on facilities in conflict zones.
- **Verification Gaps:** Access issues post-conflicts or strikes (e.g., Iran facilities in 2025–2026).

Reforms Needed

- **Institutional**: Enhanced funding, real-time/satellite/AI monitoring, stronger inspection tools.
- **Governance**: Broader representation for developing nations; better integration with climate bodies (e.g., UNFCCC).
- **Technological**: Cybersecurity standards, advanced verification for new reactor types.
- **Transparency & Adaptation:** Improved handling of climate impacts on nuclear sites and conflict-zone protocols.

Conclusion

From Iran's nuclear programme to conflict-zone reactors in Ukraine, the IAEA increasingly operates at the intersection of science, diplomacy, and security, making its strengthening a global strategic necessity.

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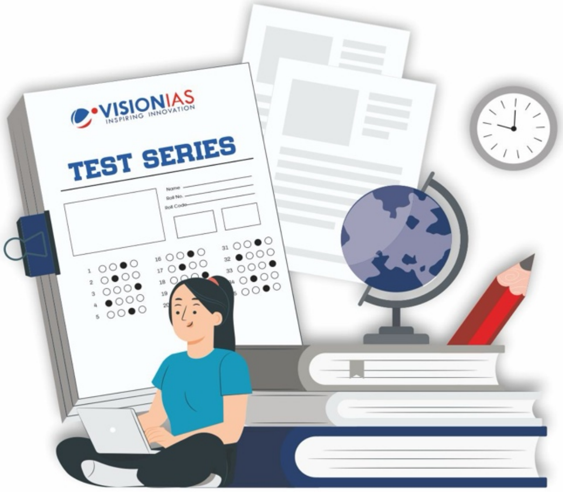
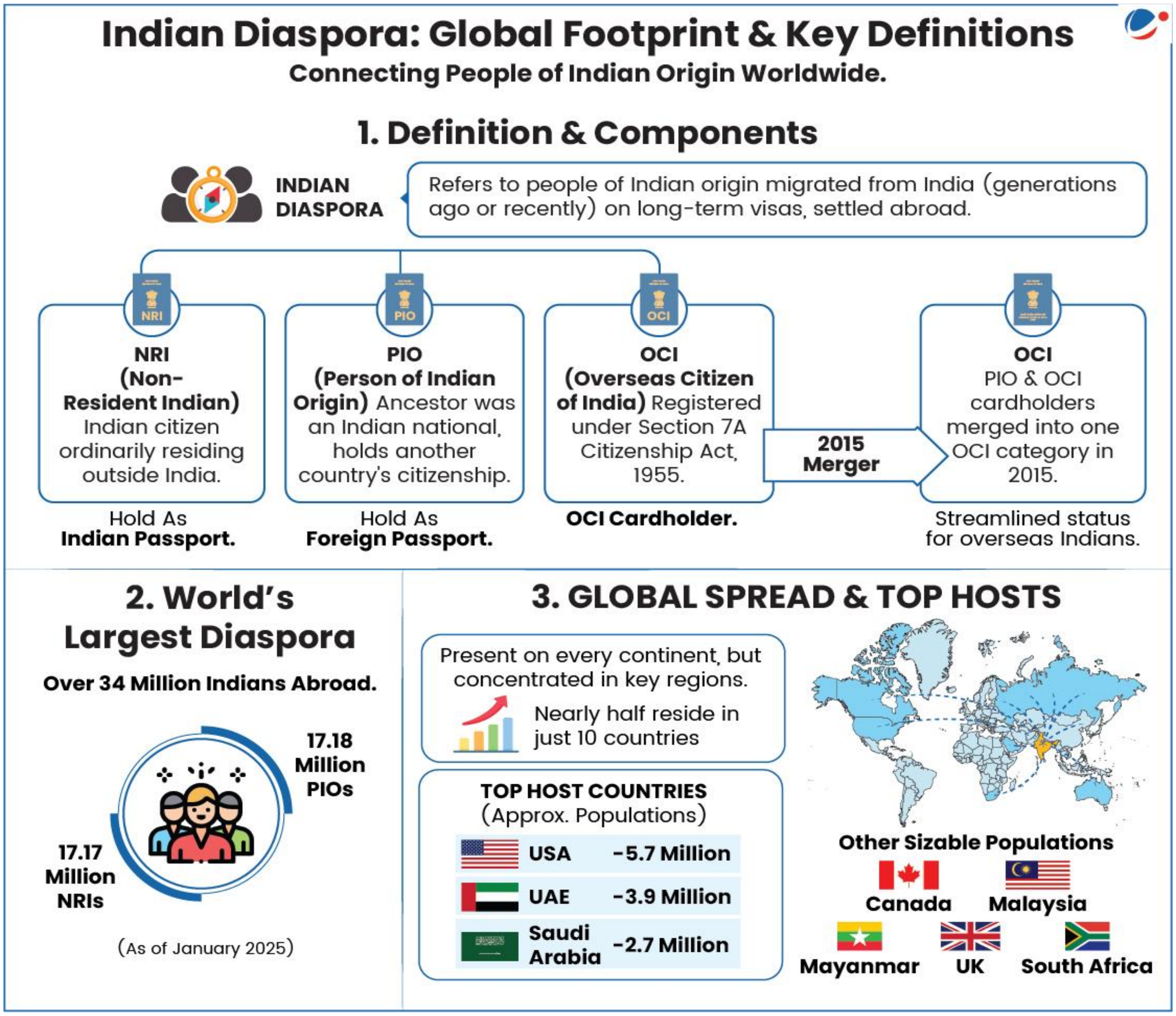


1.6. INDIAN DIASPORA

Why in the News?

A Parliamentary Standing Committee released its **report on government action regarding** issues of the Indian diaspora, **including NRIs, PIOs, OCIs, and migrant workers.**



Indian Diaspora: Global Footprint & Key Definitions

Connecting People of Indian Origin Worldwide.

1. Definition & Components

INDIAN DIASPORA: Refers to people of Indian origin migrated from India (generations ago or recently) on long-term visas, settled abroad.

NRI (Non-Resident Indian) Indian citizen ordinarily residing outside India.
Hold As **Indian Passport.**

PIO (Person of Indian Origin) Ancestor was an Indian national, holds another country's citizenship.
Hold As **Foreign Passport.**

OCI (Overseas Citizen of India) Registered under Section 7A Citizenship Act, 1955.
OCI Cardholder.

2015 Merger

OCI PIO & OCI cardholders merged into one OCI category in 2015.
Streamlined status for overseas Indians.

2. World's Largest Diaspora

Over 34 Million Indians Abroad.

17.18 Million PIOs

17.17 Million NRIs

(As of January 2025)

3. GLOBAL SPREAD & TOP HOSTS

Present on every continent, but concentrated in key regions.

Nearly half reside in just 10 countries

TOP HOST COUNTRIES
(Approx. Populations)

USA	**-5.7 Million**
UAE	**-3.9 Million**
Saudi Arabia	**-2.7 Million**

Other Sizable Populations

Canada **Malaysia**

Mayanmar **UK** **South Africa**

Key Highlights of Committee Report

Key Issues Highlighted	Key Recommendations
Lack of a uniform definition of NRIs.	MEA should propose a common, **legally binding definition of NRIs.**
Limited voting rights for **NRIs requiring physical presence.**	Options like the **Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) should be explored.**
Inadequate and **inconsistent diaspora data.**	MEA and Bureau of **Immigration should create real-time**, reliable migrant data systems.
Low transfer of **sentenced Indian prisoners from abroad.**	MHA should **expand and amend bilateral agreements** to ease prisoner repatriation.
Weak emigrant protection **due to illegal agents and migration.**	Establish **Protector of Emigrants (PoE) offices** in uncovered states and strengthen **oversight of recruitment agents**.

Significance of the Indian Diaspora

- **Cultural & Soft Power:** The diaspora has **spread Indian culture, languages, and traditions worldwide**.
    - This is visible in **Southeast Asia through temples** and festivals.
- **Economic Contribution**: India is the **world's largest remittance recipient** (**$135.46 billion in FY 2024–25).**
    - Remittances (~3–3.5% of GDP) are the **second-largest external financing source after services**.
- **Political & Strategic Influence**: Over 260 people of **Indian origin hold elected offices globally.**
    - Diaspora presence strengthens ties, **especially with Gulf countries hosting millions of Indian workers.**
- **Knowledge & Technology**: Indians form a strong presence in **global STEM sectors.**
    - Around 25% **of Silicon Valley startups** are led by people of Indian origin.

India's Engagement with its Diaspora

India's diaspora policy rests on four pillars: **Care, Connect, Celebrate, and Contribute**.

- **Care:**
    - **Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana**: Insurance cover for overseas Indian workers.
    - **MADAD Portal:** Time-bound consular grievance redressal.
    - **Migration & Mobility Agreements**: Promote mobility of students and professionals.
- **Connect**:
    - **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas**: Biennial engagement event held on 9 January.
    - **Know India Programme**: Exposure visits for diaspora youth.
- **Celebrate:**
    - **Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards**: Highest honour for overseas Indians.
    - **Girmitiya Engagement**: Outreach to descendants of indentured Indians.
- **Contribute:**
    - **Knowledge Initiatives**: VAJRA, PRABHASS, and VAIBHAV schemes link global Indian experts with Indian institutions.

Conclusion

The Indian diaspora is a **vital bridge between India and the world**. By strengthening engagement and addressing emerging challenges, India can deepen this partnership, enabling the diaspora to contribute further to India's growth and global influence.

1.7. RISE OF ANTI-IMMIGRATION POLICIES

Why in the News?

A sharp rise in global anti-immigration **rhetoric, protests, and restrictive policies has emerged** across many parts of the world.

More on the News

- **Recent examples:** The US **raising H1B visa fees;** Japan's Sanseito Party calling immigration a **"silent invasion"**, etc.
- **Factors**: **Populism** leading to **curb to legal migration, tightening of borders**, etc.

Causes of rising Anti-Immigration Sentiment

- **Economic:** E.g., Loss of Job fears **boosted BREXIT support**.
- **Social & Cultural:** Threat to **identity, language, and traditions.**
- **Political**: For **electoral gains**, e.g., Italy's Meloni warns of a **migrant "invasion".**
- **Security**: Linked to **illegal entry, terrorism, and crime**. E.g., Stricter **US laws** after 9/11.
- **Misinformation:** E.g., **Fake news** on **migrant crimes in Germany** fuelling panic**.**

Impact of Anti- Immigration

- **Economic Impact: Lowers labour supply** raising costs and slowing growth**. E.g.** Post-Brexit UK saw **farming shortages.**
- **Demographic Impact:** E.g. **Ageing-population** issues in **Japan and EU**, reducing workers and increasing dependency.
- **Socio-cultural:** Limits **multicultural exchange, intensify** polarization and xenophobia.
- **Reduced Innovation:** Due to **fewer skilled migrants. E.g.** 55% of U.S. $1-billion start-ups had an immigrant founder.
- **Political Impact:** Strict laws can strain ties with source **countries and attract** human-rights criticism.

Measures taken to prevent illegal Immigration in India: National Register of Citizens (NRC), Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025, etc.

How should India respond?

- **Diplomatic engagement with host countries**: like the **US, Australia,** to ensure legal safeguards.
- **Leveraging Diaspora Diplomacy:** to counter stereotypes and highlight Indians' global contributions.
- **Strengthening domestic opportunities:** In **IT, manufacturing, etc.** to reduce migration pressures with Make in India, Skill India, etc.
- **Countering misinformation and xenophobia**: E.g. Work with global digital platforms.

Conclusion

Rising anti-immigration sentiment stems from economic fears, cultural insecurities, and populism. For India, the priority should be safeguarding its diaspora while promoting balanced, rights-based migration policies to ensure migration remains a strength.

1.8 KEYWORDS

Plurilateralism / Minilateralism	Variable Geometry	Value-Based Realism	Decolonising Multilateralism
Global Public Good	Thucydides Trap	G2 Duopoly	External Balancing
Strategic Autonomy	Militarisation of Economic Geography	Geo-Economics over Geo-Politics	Weaponization of Chokepoints
Supply Chain Diversification	Diaspora Diplomacy	Vishwamitra	Doctrinal Ambiguity

1.9 PRACTICE QUESTION

Amidst the decline of the rules-based world order and the proposed "G2" duopoly, evaluate the implications for the middle powers like India. How can India leverage its position as a middle power to maintain strategic autonomy and shape a multipolar global order?

Introduction	Body Part-1	Body Part-2	Conclusion
Briefly define the declining rules-based order, emergence of a potential G2 arrangement.	Examine the strategic, economic, diplomatic, and security implications of a weakening multilateral order and G2 dominance for middle powers such as India.	Discuss how India can utilize its middle-power status through strategic autonomy, issue-based coalitions, multilateral engagement, economic strength, and norm-shaping initiatives to promote multipolarity.	Emphasize India's potential to act as a bridge-builder and balancing power in fostering an inclusive, stable, and multipolar global order.

2. REGIONAL, AND GLOBAL GROUPING AND AGREEMENTS INVOLVING INDIA AND/OR AFFECTING INDIA'S INTEREST

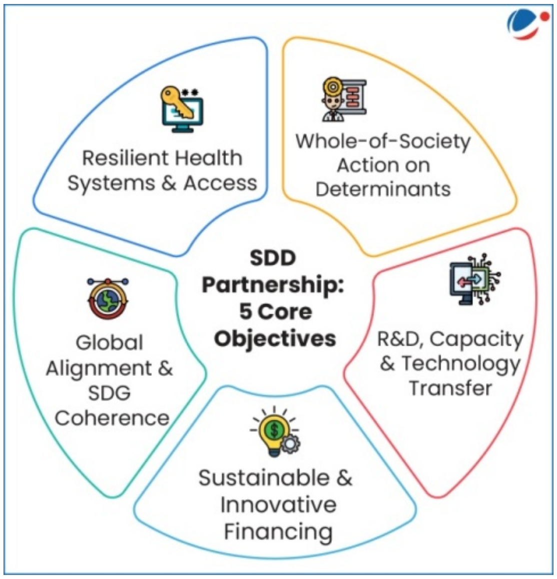
2.1. BRICS SUMMIT

Why in the News?

At the 17th BRICS Summit held at Rio de Janeiro, leaders signed the **Rio Declaration on strengthening Global South cooperation for inclusive, sustainable governance.**

Key Highlights of the 17th BRICS Summit

- **Participation**: First summit with **11 full members, 10 partners, 8 invited nations**, and many international reps.
    - Welcomed **Indonesia as member**; Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Nigeria, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Uganda, Uzbekistan as partners.
- **Launch of Partnership for Elimination of Socially Determined Diseases (SDDs):** To boost **cooperation and resources to eliminate SDDs** linked to poverty and inequality in the Global South.
- **BRICS Leaders' Declaration on Global AI Governance**: Principles on **digital sovereignty, UN multilateralism, responsible AI development, fair competition, data fairness**, environmental sustainability, and ethical AI.
- **BRICS Leaders' Framework on Climate Finance**: Roadmap for five years **to enhance climate change resource mobilization.**


SDD Partnership: 5 Core Objectives
Resilient Health Systems & Access
Whole-of-Society Action on Determinants
R&D, Capacity & Technology Transfer
Sustainable & Innovative Financing
Global Alignment & SDG Coherence

BRICS Leaders' Framework Declaration on Climate Finance

- **Climate finance goal:** Calls on developed countries to provide **USD 300 billion yearly by 2035 to developing nations**, meeting USD 100 billion yearly target through 2025.
- **Innovative financial instruments:** Supports blended **finance, guarantees, insurance, thematic bonds, forex risk mitigation**, and regulatory incentives.
- **Tropical Forest Forever Fund (TFFF):** Recognized as a **mechanism to fund tropical forest conservation,** launched **at COP30 in Belém, Brazil.**
    - Aims for **large-scale, predictable payments** combining public and private funds, targeting USD 4 billion annually.
    - Payments based on **each country's preserved tropical forest area.**

BRICS and Global South Cooperation

Rio de Janeiro Declaration **underscores BRICS' commitment to the Global South**.

- **Strengthen Global Governance**: Calls for more **developing countries' roles in global decisions**, transparent UN leader selection, and UN reforms supporting Brazil and India.
- **Multipolarity and Global South:** Highlights **Global South's role amid geopolitical tensions**, economic slowdown, tech change, and protectionism.
- **Bretton Woods Institutions Reform:** Urges governance **reforms with merit-based, inclusive selection** and diversity.
- **Trading System**: Warns against **unilateral tariffs; supports fair, open, consensus-based WTO** trade system.

- **International Economic Cooperation:** Pushes for **BRICS Economic Partnership 2030** and **BRICS Multilateral** Guarantees pilot to reduce investment risk.

About BRICS

- **Genesis:** British economist **Jim O' Neill** in 2001 coined the acronym '**BRIC**' representing the emerging economies of **Brazil, Russia, India, and China**.
- **Aim:** To reform global governance and provide alternatives to Western-dominated institutions (IMF, World Bank, UNSC).
- **Three pillars of Cooperation of BRICS:** Political and security; Economic and financial; and Cultural and people-to-people cooperation.
- **Represents:** Approximately **49.5 % of the global population**, around **40% of the global GDP** and around **26% of global trade**.
- **New Development Bank (NDB):** Established during the 6th BRICS Summit in Fortaleza, Brazil (2014) with an initial authorized capital of USD 100 billion.
- **Members:**
  - **Initial members (BRICS):** Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa.
  - **New members (BRICS+):** Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Conclusion

By addressing pressing global challenges, from climate change to digital governance, the Rio declaration underscores **BRICS' commitment to building a multipolar world order** rooted in equity, cooperation, and shared prosperity. This makes BRICS not just a grouping of economies, but a platform shaping the future of global governance.

2.2. INDIA–BRAZIL–SOUTH AFRICA (IBSA)

Why in the News?

India–Brazil–South Africa (IBSA) Leaders' Meeting held on the sidelines of the G20 Summit 2025.

Key Proposals of India at Meeting

- India pushed for **urgent UNSC reform**, called for united action for global peace and prosperity and also highlighted IBSA's possible role in shaping safe, trustworthy, and human-centric AI norms.
- **Institutionalizing Dialogue:** Proposed institutionalizing the National Security Advisers-level dialogue between the three countries to enhance cooperation on security issues.
- **IBSA Digital Innovation Alliance:** For sharing **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** among three nations such as UPI, CoWIN-type health platform, Cybersecurity frameworks and Women-led tech initiatives.
- **Climate Resilience Fund:** Proposed establishing an IBSA Fund for Climate Resilient Agriculture.

About IBSA Forum

- **Founded:** In 2003 via the **Brasilia Declaration** and named as **IBSA Dialogue Forum.**
- **Members:** India, Brazil, South Africa; three **major Global South** democracies across **three continents**.
- **Objectives**: To contribute to the construction of a **new international architecture** and bring their voice together on global issues.
- **Cooperation in IBSA is on three fronts:**
  - Forum for consultation and coordination on global and regional political issues;
  - Trilateral collaboration on concrete areas/projects, through working groups and People-to-People Forums; and
  - Assisting other developing countries by taking up projects in the latter through IBSA Fund.
- **Key Initiatives:**
  - **IBSA Trust Fund (Operationalised in 2004):** It has allocated funds for Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

    - The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) is the Fund Manager and secretariat of the IBSA Fund.
  - **IBSAMAR:** a joint multinational maritime exercise among Indian, Brazilian, and South African Navy.

Importance of IBSA for India:

- **Platform for South-South Cooperation**: Key forum for India to lead and partner with developing democracies from Asia, Africa, and Latin America.
- **Voice of Global South**: Strengthens India's push for UN Security Council reform, fair trade rules, climate justice, and multilateral reforms.
- **IBSA Fund**: Showcases India's development assistance through practical projects in poverty alleviation, health, agriculture, and capacity building across developing countries.
- **Democratic Alternative**: Provides a values-based grouping (democracies) distinct from BRICS, helping India balance its foreign policy.
- **Strategic Benefits**: Enhances trilateral cooperation in trade, technology, defence, and global issues while expanding India's diplomatic footprint.

Conclusion:

As the world moves towards multipolarity, IBSA offers India a unique platform to align democratic values with Global South priorities, bridging continents through cooperation in technology, development, and governance reform.

2.3. SCO SUMMIT

Why in the News?

Prime Minister of India participated in the **25th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit, 2025** in Tianjin, China on September 1, 2025.

More on the News

- Summit ended with the **Tianjin Declaration and SCO Development Strategy until 2035.**
- SCO Chairmanship for 2025–2026 **passed to Kyrgyz Republic.**
- **Merged dialogue partners and observers into new category**: SCO partner countries.
  - Laos admitted as **partner country; SCO now has 27 countries (10 members + 17 partners).**
- SCO granted **Observer status** to the **Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).**
  - **CIS** was established in 1991 for **trade and military cooperation between the former USSR States** (except Baltic States).

Key Outcomes of the SCO Summit

- **Security & Counterterrorism:** Condemned Pahalgam attack, **marking diplomatic success for India.**
  - **Earlier in June 2025,** India **declined to sign the SCO Defence Ministers' declaration**, citing its **omission of the Pahalgam attack** while mentioning Balochistan, which reflected selective concern over terrorism.
  - Urged adoption of India's **Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) for a global anti-terror framework.**
  - Agreed to set up **SCO Anti-Drug and Security Threat Centres.**
- **Global Governance & Trade**
  - Backed China's **Global Governance Initiative (GGI)** promoting sovereign equality and multilateralism.
  - Moved toward **SCO Development Bank and Credit Mechanism** as non-dollar alternatives.
- **Technological Cooperation:** China proposed the use of its **BeiDou System** for SCO members **as a GPS alternative.**
- **Other Outcomes:** Supported India's "One Earth, One Family, One Future" and India proposed a **Civilisation Dialogue Forum (enhances soft power).**

India's Strategic Opportunities within the SCO Framework

- **Central Asia Outreach:** Strengthens ties with CARs, aligns with Connect Central Asia Policy.
- **Energy Security:** Taps uranium from Kazakhstan.
- **Connectivity Boost: Supports** International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**.**
- **Diplomatic Channel:** Engages China and Pakistan.

What are India's concerns regarding SCO?

- **China's Dominance:** China attempts to steer SCO for its own strategic goals like BRI
- **Expansion Challenge:** New members like Belarus dilute Central Asian focus.
- **Weak Implementation:** Lacks executive authority, remains mostly declarative.
- **Anti-West Image:** Perceived as anti-West amid China-Russia-Iran tensions.

How India balances Strategic Autonomy with multilateral engagement in the SCO?

- **National Interest First:** Opposed China's BRI.
- **Principled Participation:** Active in Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)
- **Development Focus: e.g.** SCO Sub-Group on Cooperation in **Traditional Medicine and Startups and Innovation.**
- **Leveraging close Relationship with Russia**: E.g. India and Russia cooperate on **core agenda items in the SCO.**

Role of SCO in Reshaping Global Multilateral Order

- **Strategic Presence:** Covers 80% of Eurasia, **42% of global population**.
- **Economic Strength:** Contributes **25% of global GDP.**
- **Challenging West:** Emerging alternative to Western-led forums.
- **Security Role:** Formed Afghanistan Contact Group (ACG) in 2005 to engage Afghanistan.

Conclusion

As competing visions of global order emerge, the SCO provides India an avenue to influence Eurasian governance while ensuring that multipolarity does not translate into the dominance of any single power.

2.4. QUAD

Why in the News?

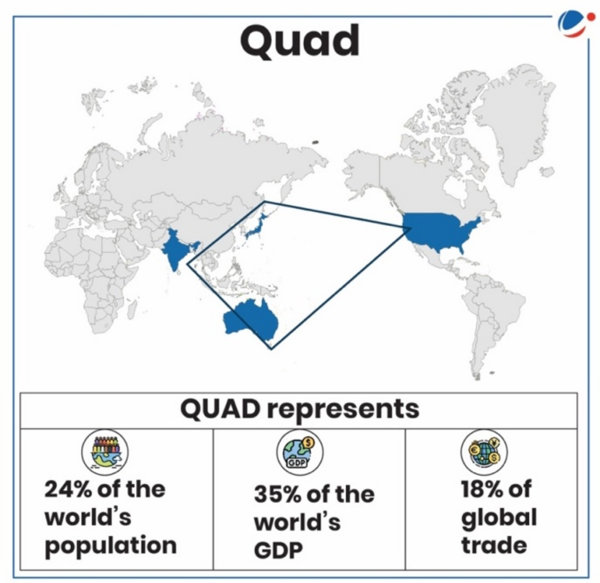
11th Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in New Delhi.

Key Initiatives Announced

- **Quad Critical Minerals Initiative Framework**: A **$20 Billion Critical Minerals Initiative** to coordinate investments in mining, processing, and recycling to strengthen global supply chains.
- **Indo-Pacific Initiatives**
    - **Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Collaboration (IPMSC) Initiative:** Initially to focus on Indian Ocean Region, it **enhances real-time information sharing and maritime awareness** using QUAD Members' combined surveillance capabilities.
    - **Quad Initiative on Indo-Pacific Energy Security:** To identify areas of **cooperation in technology, management, policy, international market analysis, and emergency response exercises** to ensure open, stable energy markets and diversified supply chains.
    - **Indo-Pacific Connectivity:** Pledged **to connect all Pacific Island Forum countries via undersea cables by 2026** and committed **to advance port infrastructure in Fiji** under **Quad Ports of the Future Partnership.**
- **Other Outcomes**
    - **Commitment to UNCLOS:** for maintaining navigational rights, freedoms, overflight, and flow of lawful global commerce, esp. in t**he Strait of Hormuz, Red Sea and the East and South China Seas.**

  - **Coast guard led Quad-at-Sea Ship Observer Mission (under Wilmington Declaration)**: To be hosted by India, after success of 1st mission from Palau to Guam, to address unlawful maritime activities.
  - **Next-Gen Communication Standards collaboration** announced, specifically on 6G development.

About Quad



- It is an **informal strategic grouping** comprising **India, US, Japan, and Australia.**
  - **Not a formal military alliance** but a flexible diplomatic partnership.
- **Origin:** It originated to coordinate **humanitarian assistance after 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami**.
  - **2007**: Formally proposed as dialogue by then-Japanese PM Shinzo Abe, but went dormant.
  - **2017**: Revived over concerns about challenges to the rules-based order and Indo-Pacific assertiveness.
- **Objective:** Promote an **open, free, stable, inclusive, prosperous, and resilient Indo-Pacific region** based on a rules-based order and international law (including **UNCLOS**).
- **Working Mechanism:** QUAD work is taken forward through **six leader-level working groups** on Climate, Critical and Emerging Technologies, Cyber, Health Security Partnership, Infrastructure, and Space.

Significance of QUAD for India

- **Strategic Importance**
  - The **Indo-Pacific** accounts for **~50% of global maritime trade** and ~**60% of global GDP**.
  - Provides **strategic balance** against **Chinese encirclement** by aligning with like-minded democracies.
  - Strengthens **maritime security** and **defence capabilities** (e.g., Malabar Exercise 2024).
- **Policy and Economic Benefits**
  - Boosts **India's Act East Policy** through deeper ties with East and Southeast Asia, enhanced maritime security, and economic engagement.
  - Positions **India as a preferred investment destination** and reduces over-dependence on China via diversified supply chains.
  - Supports **technological cooperation and self-reliance goals** (Aatmanirbhar Bharat).

Challenges Facing the Quad

- **Limited institutionalization:** operates mainly through summits and working groups rather than a formal structure or secretariat.
  - Further, **bilateral issues**, such as **U.S. tariffs on India**, also contribute to divergences between the Member countries.
- **Perceived as Cold War mentality:** China criticises it as an "**Asian NATO**" and views it as divisive.
- **Diverging member priorities**:
  - **India** focuses on regional security (China).
  - **US** pursues broader global strategic goals.
  - **Australia** balances economic ties with China.
  - **Japan** relies on US security guarantees.
- **External distractions for the US**: e.g., Ukraine and Middle East conflicts.
- **Dilution of Focus**: New groups like **SQUAD** (US, Japan, Australia, Philippines) may divert attention from QUAD's original objectives.
- **Delivery gaps**: such as the failure to deliver the promised 800 million COVID-19 vaccine doses.

- **India's Specific Concerns**
  - Risk of **escalating tensions with China** on multiple fronts.
  - Potential **compromise to India's strategic autonomy** and flexible partnerships.
  - Possible **alienation of key partners such as Russia and Iran**, and impact on engagements in BRICS and SCO.

Way Forward

- **Institutional Strengthening**: Consider establishing a **formal secretariat** for better coordination and long-term viability.
- **Focus on Regional Prosperity**: Emphasise contributions to inclusive growth and maintain flexibility on security issues.
- **Complement Existing Frameworks**: Work in synergy with **ASEAN, IORA, and other regional bodies** rather than competing with them.
- **Expand Partnerships**: Engage other **Indo-Pacific nations (e.g., Vietnam, Indonesia)** on shared priorities like climate resilience, maritime security, and infrastructure.
- **Strategic Ambiguity**: Prioritise **non-traditional security areas** (health, climate, infrastructure, technology) to advance cooperation while **minimising direct confrontation with China**.

Conclusion

The Quad has the potential to serve as the **democratic anchor of the Indo-Pacific** by delivering tangible outcomes in vaccines, maritime security, supply chain resilience, and technological cooperation, provided it achieves greater institutional depth and inclusive regional synergy.

BRICS vs. QUAD: India's Strategic Balancing (as India Chairs both BRICS and QUAD in 2026)

- **Strategic Benefits for India**
  - **Geopolitical Leverage:** Prevents India from becoming a junior partner to any single superpower like the US or China.
  - **Strategic Autonomy:** Allows India to purchase Russian oil and military hardware while expanding defense partnerships with Washington.
  - **Global South Leadership:** Uses BRICS to position itself as a champion for developing nations without alienating Western markets.
- **Challenges in Balancing**
  - **The China Dilemma:** China is India's primary security threat in the Quad, yet India must sit at the same table with Beijing within BRICS.
  - **Polarisation:** Escalating conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East make it harder for India to remain neutral without facing Western pressure.
  - **De-dollarisation:** Russia and China push for a non-dollar financial system in BRICS, while India prefers to protect its deep economic ties to the US dollar.

Conclusion

India's **multi-alignment strategy maximizes its strategic autonomy** by using the Quad to counter China's maritime influence while leveraging BRICS to lead the Global South and resist Western hegemony.

2.5. G20 SUMMIT

Why in News?

The 20th G20 Summit was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, themed **'Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainability', marking the first-ever G20 Summit on African soil.**

Key Takeaways of the G20 Summit 2025 (Johannesburg Declaration)

- **Debt Sustainability**: Proposed a **Cost of Capital Commission** to examine rising borrowing costs for developing countries.
- **Global Resilience & Development**:
  - Universal early warning systems under **UN Early Warnings for All Initiative by 2027;**
  - **AI for Africa Initiative** to enhance computing power across African nations.
- **Energy & Climate Transition**: **Mission 300** (World Bank & African Development Bank**)** to provide electricity to 300 million Africans by 2030.
- **Commitment to triple global renewable energy** capacity and double energy **efficiency improvements by 2030.**
- **G20 Critical Minerals Framework**: Voluntary blueprint for **sustainable mineral value chains, exploration, and governance while preserving sovereign rights of resource-endowed countries.**
- **Youth & Gender Targets:**
  - **Nelson Mandela Bay Target**: Reduce youth **Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET)** rate **by 5% by 2030.**
  - **Revised Brisbane-eThekwini Goal**: Cut gender gap in labour participation by **25% by 2030 (from 2012 levels).**

G20

Inception: It was founded in 1999 after Asian Financial Crisis.

Composition: 19 countries+ European Union (EU) + African Union (AU)

Represents ~80% of global GDP, 75% of global exports & 60% of global population.

Organisational Structure: The G20 operates without a permanent secretariat.

Work is conducted through two parallel streams:-

a. **Finance Track** (led by Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors) &

b. **Sherpa Track** (It is headed by Sherpa who is representative of the Leader).

India's proposals at G-20 Summit 2025 included creation of

- G20 Global Traditional Knowledge Repository
- G20 Africa Skills Multiplier
- G20 Global Healthcare Response Team
- Open Satellite Data Partnership
- Critical Minerals Circularity Initiative
- G20 Initiative on Countering the Drug Terror Nexus

Significance of the G20:

- **Legitimacy & Inclusivity**: Combines **G7, BRICS, and AU**, giving global legitimacy.
- **Economic Crisis Management**: Coordinates policies; **contained 2008 Financial Crisis.**
- **Multilateral Reform**: Pushes **IMF, World Bank, WTO reforms for 21st-century** challenges.
- **Global Agenda Setter**: Sets norms on taxation, **digital infrastructure, and global frameworks.**
- **Global South Impact – 2025:**
  - Presidencies of **Indonesia, India, Brazil, South Africa advanced development priorities.**
  - Africa-centered summit showed **resilience and growing Global South influence.**

Challenges Faced by G20 in Contemporary World Order:

- **Consensus Fatigue**: Diverging interests **(e.g., US-China, US-Russia) lead to watered-down declarations.**

- **Undermined Legitimacy**: Absence of key leaders (**e.g., US in 2025) weakens G20's authority.**
- **Non-Binding Pledges**: Commitments lack enforcement, **causing delays in climate finance, debt restructuring.**
- **Ineffective Frameworks**: Debt treatment frameworks **criticized as slow and complex.**
- **Other Challenges:**
    - **Protectionism & Trade**: Nationalistic policies **(e.g., US "MAGA") threaten global trade.**
    - **Agenda Overload:** Expanding topics (AI, health, gender) **dilute focus and strain resources.**

Conclusion

India's ability to drive G20 priorities on debt relief, critical minerals, and digital public infrastructure will define its role in shaping a multipolar world order. The Johannesburg Summit therefore marks a strategic inflection point for India to translate agenda-setting into sustained global leadership.

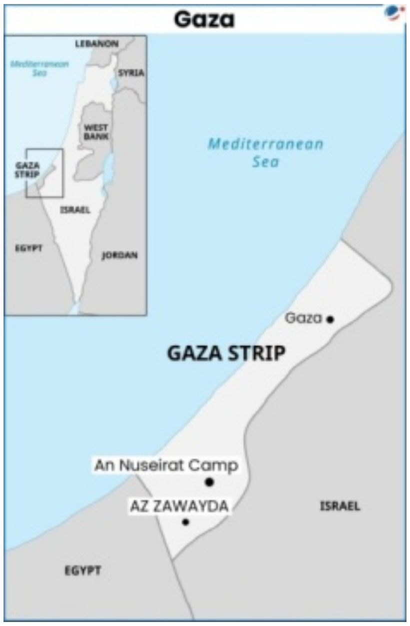
2.6. GAZA PEACE SUMMIT

Why in the News?

The US and Egypt co-hosted the **Gaza Peace Summit in Sharm El-Sheikh to promote peace in Gaza and stability in the Middle East.**

More on the News

- **US 20-point Peace Plan:** Signed b**y the US, Egypt, Qatar, and Turkey** to resolve disputes through **diplomacy**, not force. It seeks
    - **Hamas's disarmament and** internationally monitored **reconstruction of Gaza**.
    - No **displacement of Palestinians** and **Israel will not occupy or annex Gaza,** though it does not guarantee a **two-state solution.**
- India's **Minister of State for External Affairs** attended and **welcomed efforts toward durable peace.**



'Board of Peace' for Gaza

- A key part of the **U.S. 20-point Gaza Peace Plan**, endorsed by UNSC **Resolution 2803 (2025).**
- Led to creation of the **National Committee for the Administration** of Gaza (NCAG) and **International Stabilization Force (ISF).**
- Seen as a **minilateral, leader-centric approach** to conflict resolution beyond Gaza.

Can the Board of Peace be an alternative to the United Nations (UN)?

- **Arguments in Favour**: Greater Efficiency, Diverse Stakeholders.
- **Arguments Against**: Weak International & Democratic Legitimacy (no checks & balance like UNGA), Soverignty Risks, Exclusionary nature (paid membership).

BOARD OF PEACE

Gaza Transitional Governance Body

NATURE

➜ International Body
➜ Transitional Governing Authority
➜ Conflict Peace → Administration

MANDATE

➜ Supervise NCAG
➜ Oversee ISF Operations
➜ Mobilise Global Resources
➜ Ensure Accountability
➜ Peace → Development Transition

MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE

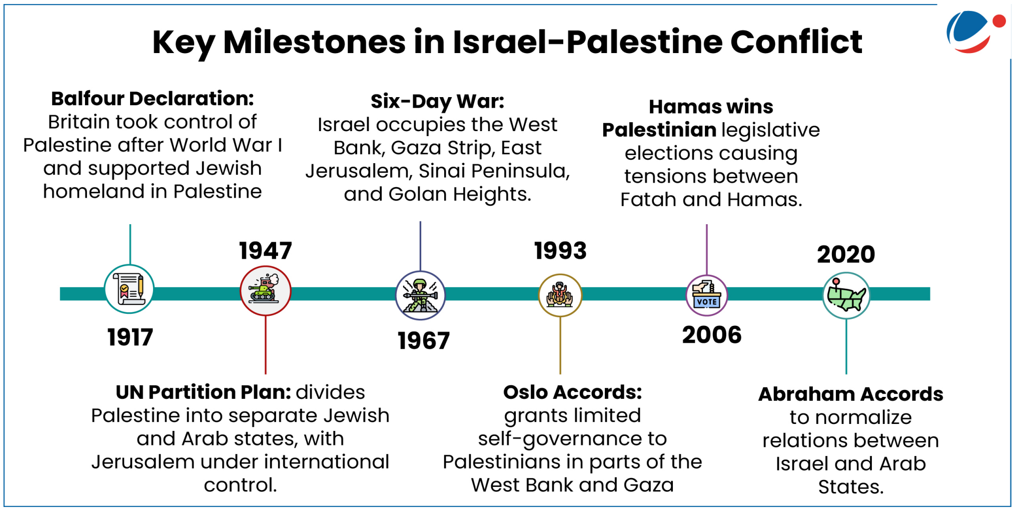
➜ **Chair:** US President,
➜ **Executive Board;** Global Leaders (Eg. Ajay Banga)
➜ **Global Invitees:** India | Argentina | Canada Egypt | Turkey etc.

MEMBERSHIP TERMS

➜ Invitation-based members
➜ **3-Year Term** (No Contribution)
➜ **Permanent Membership** ($1 Billion Contribution)

Significance of Peace in the region

- **Regional Prosperity**: The peace plan may expand the **Abraham Accords and widen regional stability**.
- **Strategic Location requires stability**: E.g. **vast oil and gas** reserves and control of routes like the Red Sea, Suez, etc.
- **Contemporary Geopolitics**: E.g. **Russia's security push and China's economic role—** could deepen fragmentation without peace.
- **Global Trade:** A young, fast-growing population **(projected 580 million by 2030) offers major market** potential.
- **Importance for India**: **70% of India's oil imports, remittances** and **role via IMEC, I2U2,** etc.



Key Milestones in Israel-Palestine Conflict

1917 – **Balfour Declaration:** Britain took control of Palestine after World War I and supported Jewish homeland in Palestine

1947 – **UN Partition Plan:** divides Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem under international control.

1967 – **Six-Day War:** Israel occupies the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, Sinai Peninsula, and Golan Heights.

1993 – **Oslo Accords:** grants limited self-governance to Palestinians in parts of the West Bank and Gaza

2006 – **Hamas wins Palestinian** legislative elections causing tensions between Fatah and Hamas.

2020 – **Abraham Accords** to normalize relations between Israel and Arab States.

India's Stance on the Palestinian issue		
1947-1991	**1991-2014**	**2014- Present**
• **Strong support for a two-state** solution, shaped by anti-colonial solidarity and **NAM principles**. • Favoured a **sovereign Palestine alongside Israel;** recognized Palestine in 1988.	• Shift toward **strategic engagement with Israel;** full diplomatic ties established in 1992. • India became a **major buyer of Israeli defence equipment**.	• **De-hyphenation policy**: Relations with Israel and Palestine pursued independently. • **PM's visits to Israel (2017) and Palestine (2018)** showed support for both without altering **India's core stance on Palestine.**

Conclusion

India's present foreign policy toward Israel has witnessed **strategic recalibration.** From historical support for Palestine to increased engagement with Israel, India has gradually shown **pragmatic shift** in its priorities aligning with its **moral commitments, strategic imperatives, and regional geopolitics.**

2.7. AUKUS

Why in the News?

Australia and the UK recently signed the **Geelong treaty under AUKUS Pillar I** for 50 years of **defence cooperation.**

About Geelong Treaty

- Also called **Nuclear-Powered Submarine Partnership Treaty**, it supports security in Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific.
- **Objective:** Cooperate on design, build, operation, sustainment, disposal of SSN-AUKUS submarines and develop strong trilateral supply chains.
- Complies with nuclear **non-proliferation and AUKUS Naval Nuclear Propulsion Agreement.**

About AUKUS

- Established 2021, a **security partnership between Australia, UK, and US.**
    - **It has Two Pillars:**
        - **Pillar 1:** Develop shipbuilding, including Australia's **first nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs).**
        - **Pillar 2**: Joint development of **eight advanced military capabilities like AI, autonomy, electromagnetic warfare, modelling, simulation.**
- US will sell **submarines to Australia in 2030s**; UK and Australia to **co-produce submarines by early 2040s.**
- **Strategic Significance of AUKUS**
    - **Strengthens US-led alliance** in Indo-Pacific to counter China and show US commitment.
    - **Enhances US military presence** and access in Southeast Asia.
    - **Boosts US defence industry** via arms sales and tech transfers to Australia and UK.

Opportunities and Challenges of AUKUS

Opportunities of AUKUS	Concerns with respect to AUKUS
• **High trust among AUKUS nations**, shown by Five Eyes intelligence sharing. • **Complements QUAD** by focusing on hard power in Indo-Pacific. • **Synergy between UK and Australia** aligns with their defence strategies. • US shifts **regional security to boosting partners** amid China challenge. • Nuclear submarines offer **faster response (~20 knots) and longer endurance** than conventional.	• USA reviewing AUKUS; **expects Australia to increase defence spending** for greater burden-sharing. • AUKUS may undermine **QUAD's relevance; India's reluctance** often seen as **limiting Quad's military potential.** • **No Asian members** in AUKUS, unlike QUAD, seen as Western-dominated. • **Delivery issues:** US submarine production (1.13/year) below what's needed for AUKUS. • Risk of **nuclear proliferation and arms race** in the Pacific

Conclusion

AUKUS represents a shift from traditional alliance-building to deep technological integration, where control over advanced defence capabilities is becoming as important as territorial power in shaping the regional balance.

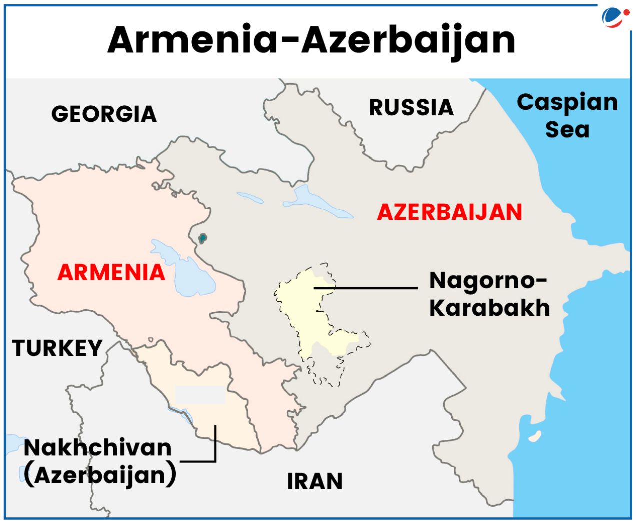
2.8. ARMENIA–AZERBAIJAN PEACE AGREEMENT

Why in the News?

The deal brokered by the United States aims to bring an **end to decades of conflict between the two South Caucasus countries.**

Key Provisions of the deal

- **Cessation of Hostilities**: Both Armenia and Azerbaijan agree to end conflict and establish diplomatic relations.
- **Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP):** Transit route linking Azerbaijan to its exclave Nakhchivan through Armenia, with US having exclusive development rights.
- **US Cooperation Deals:** Separate US agreements with both on energy, technology, and economy cooperation.



Background of the Conflict

Nagorno-Karabakh disputed mountainous region inside Azerbaijan but mainly ethnic Armenian population.

- **1980s**: Nagorno-Karabakh sought separation with Armenia's support.
- **1991**: Independent countries post-Soviet Union; dispute continued.
- **2023**: Azerbaijan regained full control; nearly 100,000 Armenians fled to Armenia.

India's Interest

- **Supports peace deal** as achievement in dialogue and diplomacy.
- Armenia is India's **Friendship and Cooperation** Treaty partner (since 1995).
- Azerbaijan lies on **International North-South Transport Corridor** connecting India with Russia via Central Asia.

2.9. KEYWORDS

Multi-Alignment Strategy	De-Hyphenation Policy	Strategic Recalibration / Pragmatic Shift	Strategic Ambiguity
Consensus Fatigue	Agenda Overload	Democratic Alternative	Democratic Anchor of the Indo-Pacific
Chinese Encirclement	Hard Power vs. Soft Power Architecture	South-South Cooperation	Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) Integration
Debt Sustainability	Innovative Climate Finance		

2.10. PRACTICE QUESTION

India's engagement with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is vital for its "Connect Central Asia" policy, yet it remains complicated by the dominant presence of adversarial neighbours.

Introduction	Body Part-1	Body Part-2	Conclusion
Briefly introduce the SCO, India's "Connect Central Asia" policy, and the strategic importance of the organization for India's regional outreach.	Discuss how SCO advances India's political, economic, connectivity, energy, security, and regional engagement objectives in Central Asia.	Examine how the presence and influence of adversarial neighbours within SCO constrain India's interests and limit the effectiveness of its engagement.	Suggest the need for pragmatic and interest-based engagement through SCO while pursuing complementary bilateral and multilateral initiatives to strengthen India's Central Asia outreach.

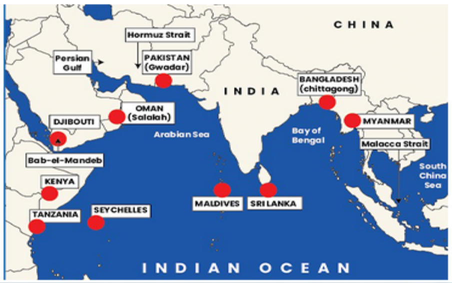
3. INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD RELATIONS

3.1. INDIAN OCEAN

3.1.1. INDIAN OCEAN REGION AT A GLANCE

Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

About Indian Ocean Region (IOR)



- IOR is bordered by **Africa** (west), the **Straits of Malacca** and **Australia** (east), **India** (north), and **Antarctica** (south).
- It includes **~36 countries**, accounts for **35% of global population**, and **40%** of the world's coastline.

Significance of the region

Economic & Trade Importance: Nearly **95%** of India's trade by volume and **68%** by value moves via sea.

Blue Economy Potential: India's **2.4 million sq. km** Exclusive Economic Zone offers opportunities in sustainable fisheries, renewable ocean energy, eco-tourism, and marine biodiversity.

Strategic & Geopolitical Value: Critical sea lanes and chokepoints (e.g., Strait of Hormuz) make it central to India's security, supported by its **11,098.81 km** coastline.

Changing Geopolitical Dynamics of Indian Ocean Region

Vulnerability of Critical Chokepoints: IOR handles **~30%** of global container traffic and **42%** of crude oil and petroleum products.

Militarisation of the IOR: Major powers are increasing presence — **US** (Diego Garcia), France (Réunion and Mayotte), China (ports and access agreements), etc. Recently, the US sank an Iranian ship near Sri Lanka.

Vulnerability of Critical Infrastructure: Undersea communication cables carrying over **95%** of global data face growing threats.

Non-Traditional Security Threats: Piracy, maritime terrorism, illegal fishing, cyber threats, and climate change add further complexity.

India's Approach in the IOR

Unified Indian Ocean Strategy: SAGAR counters terrorism, piracy, and illegal activities; **MAHASAGAR** expands it to include broader security, growth, and development goals.

Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA): Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region **(IFC-IOR)** enables real-time information sharing and coordination.

Bilateral and Multilateral Diplomacy: Indian Ocean Rim Association **(IORA)**, Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative **(IPOI)**, **BIMSTEC**, Colombo Security Conclave, and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium **(IONS)** for dialogue, cooperation, and capacity building.

'First Responder': In humanitarian crises and disasters (e.g., Operation Sagarbandhu in Sri Lanka after Cyclone Ditwah).

Joint Exercises: AIKEYME, Dosti, and **MILAN** build interoperability and trust.

Integration with Indo-Pacific: Engagement with Quad partners in logistics, infrastructure, and Maritime Domain Awareness, supported by initiatives like **IPOI**.

Way Forward for India amid New Geopolitics in IOR

Capability Development: The Indian Navy's Maritime Security Strategy emphasises multi-domain integration and preparedness for grey-zone warfare.

Island Development: Prioritise integrated development of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a key forward base for surveillance and control over Malacca Strait approaches.

Maritime Governance: Promote freedom of navigaton and adherence to **UNCLOS**.

Diversify Energy Sources: Reduce dependence on West Asian oil by increasing imports from Brazil, Norway, Canada, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Conclusion

The Indian Ocean, India's strategic backyard, is rapidly turning into a zone of great-power competition. Major powers, particularly **China**, are expanding control over key sea lanes and ports, transforming the region from a peaceful transit corridor into a strategic arena that directly threatens India's maritime security and economic interests.

3.1.2. INDIA-MALDIVES RELATIONS

Why in the News?

Indian Prime Minister's visit to Maldives marked **60 years of diplomatic ties.**

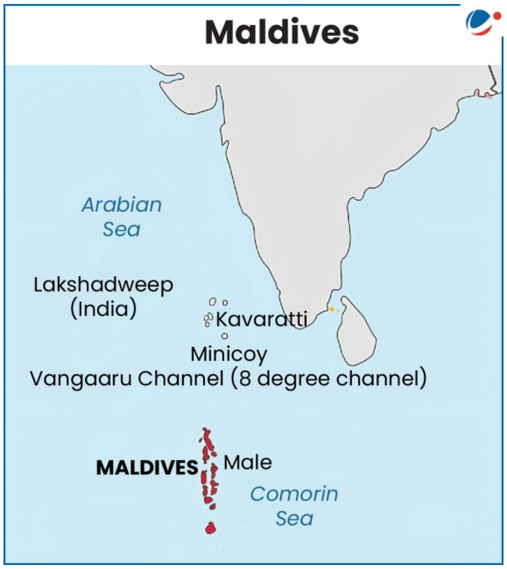
Key outcomes of the visits

- Extension of **INR 4,850 crores Line of Credit to Maldives** and **reduced debt repayment** on India-funded LoCs.
- Launch of **India-Maldives Free Trade Agreement** negotiations with agreed Terms of Reference.
- Agreement to **launch UPI in Maldives between NPCI International Payment Limited** and Maldives Monetary Authority.
- MoUs signed on **Fisheries & Aquaculture**, **Digital Solutions**, and Indian Pharmacopoeia recognition.

Areas of Cooperation

India and Maldives share **ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, and commercial bonds.** India was one of the first to **recognize Maldives after its 1965 independence** and set up diplomatic ties.

- **Strategic Location and Proximity**: Maldives sits like a **'toll gate'** between the **western Indian Ocean (Gulf of Aden, Strait of Hormuz) and eastern Indian Ocean** (Strait of Malacca).
  - Its closeness to **India's west coast and key Indian Ocean** sea-lanes gives Maldives strategic value for India.
- **Net Security Provider:** India is seen as Maldives' **net security provider**, central to India's "**Neighbourhood First"** policy and Vision MAHASAGAR for **Indian Ocean Region** security and growth.
- **Defence Cooperation and Security:** A 2016 Action Plan cements **defence ties; joint exercises include Ekuverin, Ekatha.**
  - Maldives is a **founding member** of the Colombo Security Conclave.
- **Economic Integration**: Bilateral trade hit USD 548.97 million (2023), **with India as Maldives' largest trading partner.**
- **Humanitarian Diplomacy and "First Responder"**: India has been Maldives' **prompt aid provider during crises like the 1988 coup attempt**, 2004 tsunami, 2014 water crisis, and COVID-19.
- **Extensive P2P Linkages:** India is a **top tourist source**, with over 2.09 lakh Indian arrivals in 2023.



Recent Irritants in the bilateral relations

- **Domestic Politics:** Maldives' politics is split between Anti-India and Pro-India/China camps.
- **Strategic Shift under President Muizzu**: Elected with an "**India out" nationalist campaign,** sparking anti-India actions like survey cancellations and military withdrawal.
  - Policy moved from "**India first" to "Maldives first**" to diversify foreign ties.
- **China Factor**: Joined China's **BRI in 2014;** China funded key projects like the **Friendship Bridge.**
- **Economic Instability:** Public debt may hit **135.7% of GDP by 2027** with fiscal deficits and slower growth (World Bank).
- **Radicalization Threat in India's Neighbourhood:** E.g. US listed **ISIS and Al Qaeda** facilitators in Maldives in 2023.

Conclusion

India and Maldives share common challenges in the Indian Ocean Region which have multi-dimensional implications for the security and development of both the countries. As natural partners, both must work together in advancing the maritime and security cooperation for the benefit of peoples of both India and Maldives as well as for the larger Indian Ocean Region.

3.1.3. INDIA-MAURITIUS

Why in the News?

While on a state visit to India, Mauritius' PM said **India has been and remains a time-tested and trusted partner of Mauritius.**

India-Mauritius Relations

- **Economic**: India has emerged as **one of Mauritius' leading trading partners** with key Indian exports including pharmaceuticals, cotton, cereals, motor vehicles, and mineral fuels.
    - **Mauritius is a significant source of FDI into India** constituting around 25% of India's cumulative FDI since 2000.
    - Indian companies have **invested more than USD 200 million** in Mauritius over the past five years.
- **Development Partnership:** India provided **Special Economic Packa**ge and **Extended Line of Credit** for priority projects including Metro Express, Supreme Court building, Social Housing etc.
    - India has traditionally been **first responder for Mauritius** in times of crisis including during Covid-19 and Wakashio oil-spill.
- **Cultural: Around 70% of Mauritius's population** is of Indian origin.
    - **Girmitiyas (Indentured Indian labourers)** were first brought to Mauritius from Puducherry in 1729.
    - **Strategic and Geopolitical Significance:** Mauritius' location in the **Western Indian Ocean is vital** for India's **maritime security and regional influence**.
        - **E.g.** Indian PM inaugurated a new Airstrip and a Jetty at **Agalega Island** in Mauritius.
    - Mauritius is **key to India's MAHASAGAR Vision** and the 'Neighbourhood First' policy and serves as a **key gateway for India's trade and investment** in Africa.

Conclusion

India–Mauritius ties exemplify how history, diaspora linkages, and strategic geography can converge to create a partnership that is both emotionally rooted and geopolitically consequential.

3.2. INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS

Why in the News?

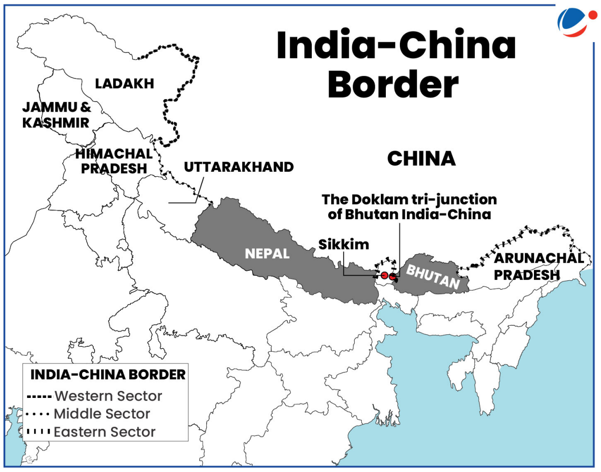
Indian PM and Chinese President met on the **sidelines of the SCO Summit 2025 in Tianjin, China.**

More on the News

- First PM visit to **China since 2018** indicate **renewed India-China engagement.**
- 24th round of **Special Representatives' (SRs)** Dialogue recently held, co-chaired by Chinese FM and India's **National Security Advisor.**

Challenges in India-China Relations

- **Unsettled Borders:** Lack of agreement along the 3,488 km LAC has caused clashes **(Doklam 2017, Galwan 2020).**
- **Trade imbalance**: India's trade deficit rose to **USD 99B (2024-25) from USD 85B (2023-24)**.
- **China-led Trilateral Nexus**: New trilateral initiatives with **Bangladesh-Pakistan** and **Pakistan-Afghanistan;**
    - **CPEC passes through PoK,** violating India's sovereignty**.**



- **China's Assertiveness**: Presence in **South Asia** (Maldives, Sri Lanka) raises concerns**; India counters via Quad (India, US, Japan, Australia).**
- **Waterpower: E.g. Chinese Dam** on Brahmaputra **(Yarlung Zangbo)** gives leverage over India**.**

Renewed Engagement between India and China:

- **Border Management**: Follow 2005 Agreement, form Expert & Working Groups, **use diplomatic/military channels to de-escalate.**
    - **E.g.** in 2024 India-China successfully resolved the military standoff in the **Depsang Plains** and **Demchok in Ladakh**, and restored mutual patrolling rights.
- **Dialogue Mechanisms**: Resume suspended talks and **People-to-People Exchanges in 2026**; focus on partnership.
- **Economic & Trade Ties:** Boost trade/investment; reopen passes **at Lipulekh, Shipki La, Nathu La.**
    - India also **allowed FDI from Land Bordering Countries (including China)** to invest **up to 10% non-controlling stakes** in a company in India.
- **75 Years of Ties**: Commemorative events in 2025; **revive Dragon-Elephant ties**; maintain strategic autonomy.
- **Other Agreements:** Restart direct flights, expand **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra in 2026; share hydrological data during emergencies.**

Significance for India from Renewed Engagement

- **Trade:** China supplies major **Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs).**
- **Investment**: **Economic Survey 2023-24** proposed to **attract Chinese investment** for Indian manufacturing.
- **Access to Critical Resources:** China dominates global **rare earth extraction (70%) and processing (90%)**.
- **Global Influence**: Stable ties enhance roles in **global governance (BRICS, SCO) and counterbalance Western influence in WTO, IMF, UN.**
- **Countering Global Challenges:** E.g. climate change, public health, and energy security.
- **Regional Peace & Stability:** Reduces border **conflict risk and strengthens South Asia and Indo-Pacific** stability.
- **India-Russia-China Triangle**: Can expand investment **opportunities and navigate US sanctions.**

Conclusion

India's approach to China embodies the principle of **'cooperate where possible, compete where necessary, and confront where unavoidable',** balancing economic opportunities with strategic vigilance.

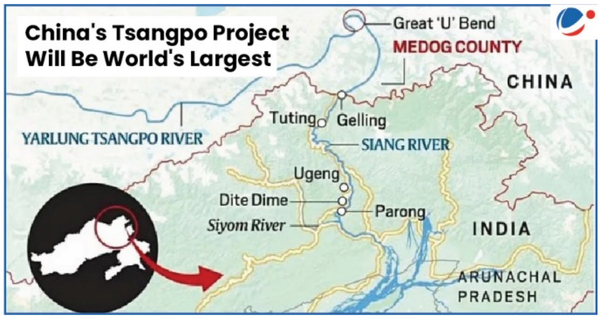
3.2.1. CHINA'S HYDROPOWER PROJECT ON THE BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER

Why in the News?

China began building the **Medog mega dam on the Yarlung Zangbo (Brahmaputra) River in Tibet.**

More on the News

- Besides power, **it aims to industrialize Tibet**.
- China calls it **a renewable energy project and an economic boost for Tibet**, supporting carbon **neutrality by 2060.**



About the Medog Hydropower Project

- **Scale and Capacity**: Will surpass **Three Gorges Dam**, generating three times more energy.
- **Location:** At the Great Bend of **Yarlung Tsangpo River**, near Arunachal Pradesh border.
- **Project design**: **A run-of-the-river type** with five cascade plants, diverting half the river's flow.

Key Concerns of the Project

- **Geopolitical Concerns:** Water flow disruption **threatens Northeast India's agriculture, food security**, and hydro projects (e.g., 2000 Siang River disaster).
    - Security risks as a **potential water weapon in conflicts.**
- **Water Resource Competition:** Brahmaputra basin faces contest among **India, China, and Bangladesh** over dams and diversion, risking regional stability.
- **Environmental Impact:** Sediment **flow disruption harms Ganges-Brahmaputra** Delta, threatens **218 fish species,** including Hilsa and Mahseer, risking two million livelihoods.
- **Disaster Vulnerability: Located in Seismic Zone V**, prone to earthquakes and landslides.
    - **Dec 2024's 7.5 quake** in Tibet highlights dam failure risks.

Existing River Water Cooperation Mechanism between India and China

- **Expert Level Mechanism (2006):** Annual talks on flood data, emergencies, and trans-border river issues.
- **Brahmaputra Data Sharing:** MoU for June–October data from three Tibetan stations; expired in June 2020, renewal pending.
- **Sutlej Data Sharing:** MoU for June–October data from one station; expired 2020, renewal pending.
- **Umbrella MoU (2013):** Extended data sharing to May 15–October 15, broadening cooperation.

Way Forward

- **India's Potential Response:**
    - **Strategic countermeasures: Plan Siang Upper Multipurpose hydropower** project in Arunachal Pradesh, proposed by **Niti Aayog in 2017**.
    - **Transparency Demands:** Demand full disclosure of **technical, environmental, seismic plans**; press for suspension until resolved.
- **Regional Coalition**: Unite downstream nations for **binding water-sharing under 1997 UN Water Convention** with data sharing and joint assessments.
- **Transboundary Cooperation:** Advocate for agreements like **China-Kazakhstan's to protect India's co-riparian rights.**
- **Water Security Framework**: Consider South Asia Water **NATO for Brahmaputra**, **Indus, Ganges to ensure data transparency,** dispute resolution, and disaster readiness, using Nile Basin and Mekong models.

Conclusion

The Yarlung Tsangpo project underscores the need for **urgent, cooperative water governance**. Without transparency and equitable sharing through mechanisms like a **middle riparian coalition** or a **South Asia Water NATO,** it risks triggering ecological damage, economic loss, and regional instability.

3.3. INDIA-PAKISTAN RELATIONS

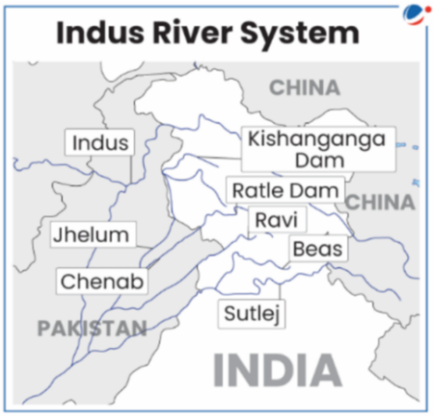
3.3.1. INDUS WATER TREATY

Why in the News?

India rejects Permanent Court of Arbitration (CoA) ruling on Indus Waters Treaty (IWT).

More on the News

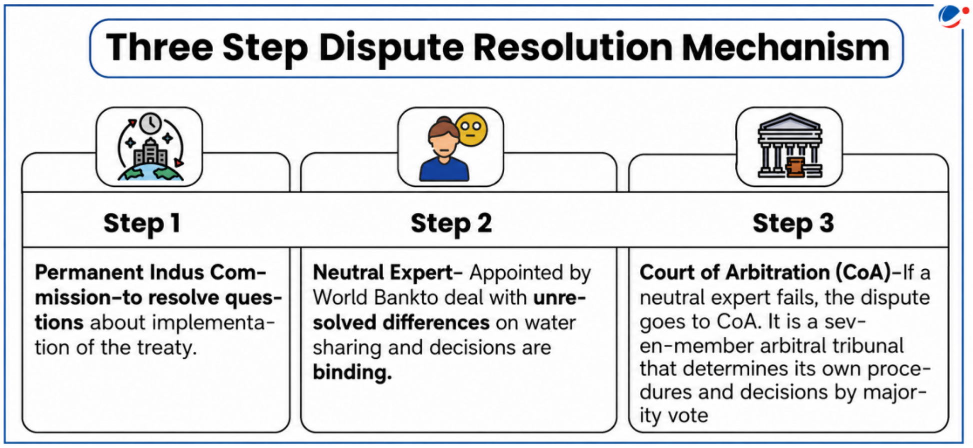
- The Hague-based CoA held that **India holding the IWT "in abeyance" does not affect its authority to rule on the disputes** regarding India's Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric projects in Jammu & Kashmir.



- CoA is a five-member arbitral panel **constituted in 2023 at the Pakistan's request** after it challenged the design of India's **Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric projects**.
- **India's argument**: The dispute fall within the remit of **Neutral Expert appointed by the World Bank.**

About Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)

- **Genesis**: Signed by India and Pakistan (in 1960) and **brokered by the World Bank** (also a signatory).
- **Objective**: Delimitation of rights and obligations regarding the use of the Indus water system.
- **Provisions for water usage rights**:
  - IWT allows **India** unrestricted use of **three eastern rivers Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej**.
  - **Pakistan** has control over **three western rivers Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab**.



Three Step Dispute Resolution Mechanism

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Permanent Indus Commission–to resolve questions about implementation of the treaty.	**Neutral Expert**– Appointed by World Bankto deal with **unresolved differences** on water sharing and decisions are **binding.**	**Court of Arbitration (CoA)**–If a neutral expert fails, the dispute goes to CoA. It is a seven-member arbitral tribunal that determines its own procedures and decisions by majority vote

- Can be used by India with certain restrictions (for irrigation, transport and power generation).
- **Implementation**: The treaty required the creation of a **Permanent Indus Commission**, with a commissioner from each country, to maintain a channel for communication and is required to meet at least once every year.

Issues with the treaty

- **Strained bilateral relations**: E.g., India put the **Indus Water Treaty under abeyance** after the **Pahalgam terrorist attack** in 2025.
- **Pakistan's frequent opposition to the Indian projects**: E.g., Kishanganga and Ratle Hydroelectric Project on Jhelum and Chenab, respectively.
- **Limitations of Judicial Recourse**: As, India prefers neutral expert for IWT; Pakistan favors Permanent Court of Arbitration's (PCA) strict interpretation.
- **Climate change**: It has altered water patterns thereby challenging IWT's river partitioning.
- **Weak Conflict-resolution method**: WB oversees IWT, however, lack of data distinguishing illegal interventions from natural variations (like low seasonal flows) is challenging.
- **No regular data sharing** as planned in the treaty.
- **Technical nature of the Treaty**: Prompts diverse and wide-ranging interpretations.

Way Forward

- **Revisiting the IWT**: By take into account the technological advances which were absent at the time of drafting the IWT.
  - **Inclusion of Principles of International Water Law**: **Principles of Equitable and Reasonable Utilisation** (ERU) and **No Harm Rule** (NHR) can help bridge differences.
- **Empowering Indus Water Commissioners**: So that they make apolitical decisions.
  - Regular meetings and data sharing can prevent issues.
- **Implement adaptive water management**: To ensure river sustainability amid climate change challenges.
- Promoting **open data policy** for promoting transparency and applied scientific research.

Conclusion

As Indian Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** has emphasized, **“Blood and water cannot flow together”**, highlighting that sustainable cooperation under the Indus Waters Treaty can endure only in an **environment free from cross-border terrorism, mutual distrust, and political confrontation**.

3.3.2. PAKISTAN AND SAUDI ARABIA STRATEGIC MUTUAL DEFENCE AGREEMENT

Why in the News?

The recent **Pakistan and Saudi Arabia Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement** establishes that aggression against one is aggression against both**.**

Impacts of the Agreement

- **Nuclear Risk:** Extends Pakistan’s umbrella to Saudi Arabia in **tense West Asia.**
- **Power Shift:** Boosts Saudi defence vs Iran, Houthis, **Israel; signals reduced US role**; opens space for China.
- **India Impact:**
    - Pakistan may use pact as deterrence against **India and cross-border terrorism.**
    - May complicate defence, tech, and infrastructure cooperation (including IMEC corridor).
    - Highlights India’s need to manage competing Gulf relationships.

Way Forward for India

- Strengthen **economic diplomacy with Saudi Arabia & GCC** to leverage trade, energy, and investment ties.
- Maintain **quiet engagement** emphasizing **non-interference** in bilateral issues.
- Accelerate **defence self-reliance and partnerships** (US, Israel, Quad, etc.).
- **Diversify West Asian ties (**UAE, Israel, Egypt) and **monitor pact implementation**.
- Avoid over-reaction and focus on **long-term economic influence** in the Gulf.

Conclusion

Rather than viewing the pact solely through a security lens, India should leverage its growing economic and diplomatic capital to shape a more balanced, stable, and multipolar West Asian order.

3.4. INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS

Why in the News?

The Indian Parliamentary **Standing Committee on External Affairs** presented ‘**Future of India-Bangladesh Relationship’ report** in Lok Sabha amid growing bilateral frictions and emerging challenges in India–Bangladesh ties.

Key Challenges in India-Bangladesh Relations (Highlighted by the External Affairs Committee Report)

- **Strategic Realignment**: Collapse of the government in Bangladesh in August 2024 created **political uncertainty** for a period and a potential **strategic shift in Dhaka away from India**.
- **Security Threats**: Key concerns for India include **illegal migration, cross-border terrorism,** exacerbated by the **864 km of unfenced border** in challenging riverine and mountainous terrain.
- **Economic Barriers and Trade Imbalances**: Bilateral trade (USD 13.46 billion in 2024-25) remains **heavily skewed toward India**.

Bangladesh
CHINA
NEPAL
BHUTAN
NORTHEAST INDIA
ASSAM
MEGHALAYA
GARO HILLS
MYMENSINGH
INDIA
BANGLADESH
Kolkata (Calcutta)
Dhaka
BURMA (MYANMAR)
Bay of Bengal

  - Other challenges include **infrastructure constraints at land ports, high congestion, and the influx of third-country goods** (such as Chinese fabrics) under preferential provisions.
- **Water Sharing and Environmental Crisis**: The **Ganga Water Treaty (1996)** expires in December 2026, with no formal renewal discussions underway.
  - Also**,** agreements on **53 shared rivers (including Teesta) remain unresolved**, while the **Sundarbans delta** faces threats from **climate-driven sea-level rise**.
- **Other issues**: **China's expanding presence** (e.g. Mongla Port upgrade, submarine base at Pekua), threatens **Siliguri Corridor**; attacks on **religious minorities in Bangladesh**.

Strategic Recommendations (by the External Affairs Committee)

- **Sustained Diplomatic Engagement**: utilizing **Track II and Track 1.5 diplomacy**, pressing for free, fair, and inclusive elections.
- **Modernizing Border Management**: Priority to **completing border fencing with advanced technologies**, such as **drones, motion sensors, and laser intrusion detection**.
- **Economic Safeguards and Integration**: Accelerate negotiations for a **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** with **strict rules-of-origin verification** to prevent third-party misuse.
- **Proactive Water and Climate Diplomacy**: Renewal talks for the **Ganga Water Treaty** as per current hydrological and climate data, **joint adaptation measures for the Sundarbans**, etc.
- **Other**: Dedicated **Strategic Communication and Perception Management Unit** by the MEA; **Leveraging Regional Forums** (e.g. BIMSTEC) as an alternative to SAARC; emphasis on **people-to-people connections** (e.g. resume normal Visa operations).

India-Bangladesh Relations At A Glance

- **Important trade partners**: Bangladesh has emerged as **India's biggest trade partner in South Asia** and India is the second biggest trade partner of Bangladesh in Asia.
  - However, recent crisis has led to **India withdrawing port access** to some of the Bangladesh's trade items, such as jute.
- **Border**: 4,096 kms long.
  - **Land Boundary Agreement (2015)** and **Delimitation of Maritime boundary** are examples of peaceful resolution of boundary disputes.
- **Engagement at multiple multilateral platforms**: E.g. SAARC, BIMSTEC, BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal), IORA.

Significance for India

- **Internal connectivity**: Easier access to India's North-Eastern states. E.g. Akhaura-Agartala cross-border rail link.
- **Regional integration**: Bangladesh is situated at the convergence of our **'Neighbourhood First' Policy, Act East Policy, Vision SAGAR and Indo-Pacific Vision.**

Significance for Bangladesh

- **Developmental partnership**: In last 8 years, India has extended ~US$ 8 billion of Lines of Credit (LOC) for Bangladesh.
- **Human Resource development**: India trains Bangladesh's Civil Service officials, police officials.
- **Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR):** Vaccine Maitri (Covid-19 vaccines).
- **Energy:** E.g. transfer of **High-Speed Diesel** by India via the **India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline (IBFP).**

Conclusion

Guided by the **Gujral Doctrine** and the **Neighbourhood First Policy**, India must balance developmental cooperation with robust security safeguards to protect its strategic interests, strengthen regional stability, and counter emerging geopolitical challenges in Bangladesh.

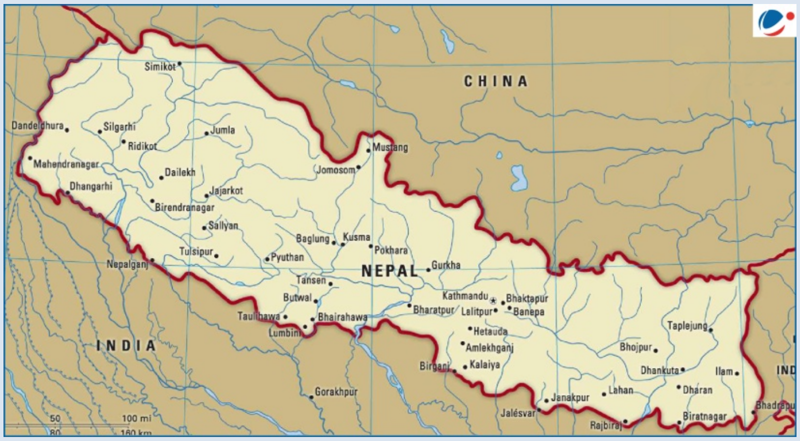
3.5. INDIA-NEPAL RELATIONS

Why in the news?

New government was recently elected in Nepal.

Overview of India-Nepal relations

Border


CHINA
Simikot
Dandeldhura
Silgarhi
Jumla
Ridikot
Mustang
Mahendranagar
Jomosom
Dailekh
Dhangarhi
Jajarkot
Birendranagar
Sallyan
Baglung
Kusma
Pokhara
Tulsipur
Pyuthan
Nepalganj
NEPAL
Gurkha
Tansen
Butwal
Kathmandu
Bhaktapur
Bharatpur
Lalitpur
Banepa
Taulihawa
Bhairahawa
Lumbini
Hetauda
Taplejung
INDIA
Amlekhganj
Bhojpur
Birganj
Kalaiya
Dhankuta
Ilam
IND
Gorakhpur
Lahan
Dharan
Janakpur
Jalésvar
Biratnagar
Rajbiraj
Bhadrapur
50
100 mi
80
160 km

- **1,751 km** long border across 5 Indian states
- **Open border** that allows citizens of both countries to travel freely without visas or passports.
- **Integrated Check Posts (ICP)** at Birgunj (Nepal's first-ever ICP); Biratnagar; Nepalgunj, and Bhairahawa.

Pillars of the Relationship

- **India Nepal Treaty of Peace** and **Friendship, 1950.**
- **Common Regional groupings**: SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) and BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal), International Solar Alliance (ISA) etc.

Economy & Trade

- India is Nepal's largest export destination.
- Nepal's exports mainly constitute **edible oil, coffee, tea and jute**.
- Nepal's main imports from India are **petroleum products, Iron & Steel, Cereals, Vehicles and Parts, Machinery parts**.

Defence cooperation

- **Gorkha Regiment** of the Indian Army comprises around 32,000 Gorkha soldiers from Nepal.
- **Joint military exercise:** Surya Kiran

Connectivity projects

- **Rail links between Jayanagar –** Bijalpura - Bardibas (Nepal's first ever broad-gauge line); Jogbani -Biratnagar; and Raxaul – Kathmandu.
- **First cross-border petroleum pipeline** in South Asia connecting Motihari in India to **Amlekhgunj** in Nepal completed in **2019.**

Emerging areas of partnership

- **Power trade agreement (2024):** Nepal to export 10,000 megawatts (MW) of hydroelectricity to India over **next 10 years.**
- **Cross-border QR payment**: Nepal started accepting UPI payments since March 2024 through interoperability with FonePay QR of Nepal.

Other Key areas of cooperation:

- **Water cooperation**: Agreements signed on major rivers like the Kosi (1954) and Gandak (1959) with Karnali and Mahakali (1996).
- **Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR):** India was the first responder (2015 earthquake in Nepal, Covid-19 pandemic).
- **Culture:** Buddhist and Ramayana circuits of **Swadesh Darshan scheme** connect with Lumbini and Janakpur.

Key Challenges in India-Nepal relations

- **Political volatility:** The changing government in Nepal often leads to inconsistent long-term domestic policy plans and foreign relations, particularly with neighbouring countries.
    - **Nepal's political** instability since the **2008 abolition** of the monarchy is primarily driven by fragile coalition politics, deep-rooted factionalism, and a series of corruption scandals.
    - **Since 2014,** there have been **17 exchanges** at the level of Head of State/ Head of Government between India and Nepal.
- **Issues related to Customs and border trade**: **E.g.,** Recently, newly elected Nepal government's enforced customs duties on goods valued above NRS (Nepalese Rupee) 100 brought from India (although Nepal's Supreme Court issued an interim stay on Balen Shah-led government decision).
- **Border dispute**: In 2020, Nepal released a **new political map** claiming Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh as part of its territory.
    - Nepal argues that these areas, located east of the Mahakali River, belong to it under the **1816 Treaty of Sugauli.**
    - The **border dispute resurfaced** in **2025** when India and China moved to resume the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through the Lipulekh Pass.
- **China Competition**: E.g., After the 2015 trade blockade by India, Nepal diversified its trade by deepening ties with China and in 2017, joined China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- **Economic Disruptions:** Major joint initiatives like the **Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project**, **Arun III, Upper Karnali, etc.** delayed due to political deadlocks and a growing trust deficit.
- **Security issues**: As per some reports, open border with Nepal is being misused by terror groups/Organized Crimes groups for **supplying trained operatives**, circulation of fake Indian currency, smuggling etc.
- **Gurkha Recruitment Issue:** India's Agnipath Scheme, which alters the terms of military recruitment, including that of Gurkhas, has led Nepal to suspend recruitment under the new framework.

Conclusion

The Gen-Z-led transition in Nepal presents an opportunity to enhance political stability, reduce uncertainty, and promote a more inclusive political system.

India, under its **"Neighbourhood First" policy**, is focusing on quiet diplomacy and community development projects in sectors like health, education, sanitation, and hydropower to strengthen ties and improve livelihoods in Nepal.

3.6. INDIA AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS

Why in News?

Afghanistan's **Foreign Minister visited New Delhi** for bilateral talks with **India's External Affairs Minister.**

More on News

- Visit enabled by a **UN Security Council** travel exemption.
- **Strategic Resetting of Ties**: Marks the first **ministerial-level trip to India** since the **Taliban takeover in 2021.**

Key outcomes of the Visit

- **Diplomatic Engagement**: India upgraded its **Technical Mission** in Kabul back to **a full Embassy.**
- **Connectivity:** Launch of the **India–Afghanistan Air Freight Corridor.**
- **Infrastructure & Energy:** India agreed to help develop **new hydroelectric projects** just like Salma dam.

Afghanistan
Uzbekistan
Tajikistan
Turkmenistan
AFGHANISTAN
Kabul
CHINA
IRAN
PAKISTAN
INDIA
Arabian Sea
Bay of Bengal

Why India is showing renewed interest in Afghanistan?

- **Safeguarding Strategic Interests:** To prevent **Afghanistan from hosting** groups like **Al-Qaeda, IS-KP, etc.**
- **Geopolitical Balancing:**
  - **Limiting Pakistan**: Leveraging strained **Pakistan–Afghanistan ties**.
  - **Checking China**: To curb **China's growing influence** in Afghanistan.
- **Protecting Investments:** To secure its **USD 3 billion development** projects across Afghanistan.

Global and Regional Perspectives

- **Moscow Format Unity**: India joined the 7th Moscow Format, **stressing that Afghanistan's stability is crucial for regional security.**
- **Russia's Recognition:** Russia recognized the **Islamic Emirate, boosting Taliban legitimacy** and its own influence.
- **U.S. Strategic Posture:** The U.S. signaled renewed interest in **Bagram Air Base.**
- **China's Initiative**: China is pushing **China–Pakistan–Afghanistan cooperation under BRI**, linking Afghanistan to CPEC.

Challenges for India: Navigating a Complex Political Landscape

- **Lack of Formal Recognition of Afghanistan:** Restricting **deeper diplomatic engagement.**
- **Diplomatic Dilemmas:** Risks losing **moral standing** if **seen as cooperating** mainly to counter Pakistan.
- **Balancing Interests and Humanitarian Concerns**: E.g. **women's rights and religious freedoms.**

Conclusion

India's renewed engagement with the Taliban reflects a **pragmatic shift** by prioritising strategic interests over earlier ideological reservations. This renewed approach is vital for securing India's borders against terrorism and countering the influence of strategic rivals.

3.6.1. AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN CONFLICT

Why in the News?

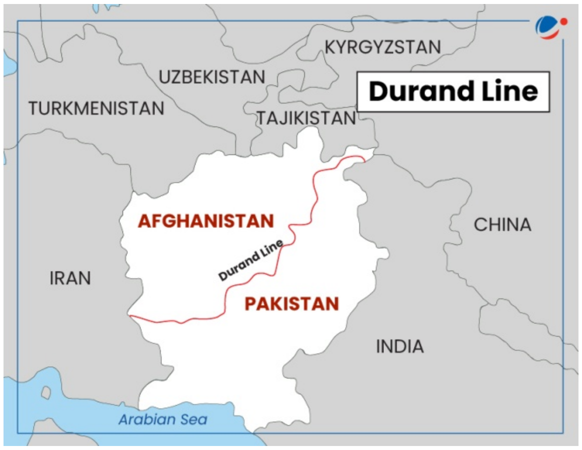
Pakistan and Afghanistan have been in a **state of open war** causing continuous deterioration in relations.

Background

- Since Taliban's return to power in 2021, **Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)** has intensified attacks inside Pakistan
- Pakistan launched **Operation 'Ghazab Lil-Haq'** and Afghanistan launched **'Radd al-Zulm'**.
- Temporary peace efforts **mediated** by Qatar, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia failed by late 2025.

Key Reasons for Conflict

- **TTP Safe Havens:** Pakistan accuses Taliban of harbouring TTP militants.
- **Durand Line Dispute:** Border rejected by Afghanistan but recognised by Pakistan.
- **Pashtun Nationalism:** Afghanistan demand for a greater Pashtun state involving Pakistani territories.



Implications

- Rising cross-border **terrorism risks for India**; Shifting Taliban dynamics affecting India's strategic interests.
- **Nuclear proliferation** concerns due to Pakistan's alliances with China and Russia.

- Adverse impact on **Regional Trade and Connectivity Projects (e.g. TAPI)**; Rise in **refugees**; etc.

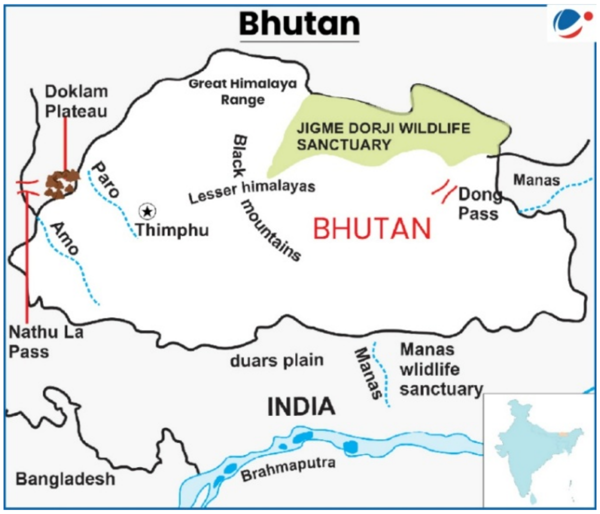
Way forward for India

- **Leverage soft-power through developmental projects** (e.g., Salma Dam); Strengthen intelligence.
- **Adopt realpolitik engagement with Taliban**; Expand India-Afghan air corridor and Chabahar Port usage.

Conclusion

India must strengthen its **intelligence gathering** and response mechanisms to **expand its regional strategic footprint**, **benefit from connectivity projects** through Afghanistan, and shield itself from **radicalisation spillovers or entanglement in proxy rivalries.**

3.7. INDIA-BHUTAN RELATIONS



Why in the News?

Prime Minister paid a **two-day State Visit to Bhutan at the invitation of the King of Bhutan.**

Key highlights:

- Inauguration of **Punatsangchhu-II Hydroelectric Project**
- Support for **Gyalsung National Service Program** with ₹200-crore grant and ₹1,500-crore concessional loan
- **MoU on railway links**: Kokrajhar–Gelephu and Banarhat–Samtse
- Land allotment in **Varanasi for construction of a Bhutanese temple/monastery.**

Historical Development of Relationship

- **Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation (1949**) established diplomatic relations.
    - **Security Clause (Article 2):** Bhutan to be guided by India in external affairs; India provided arms, technology, and military training.
- **1949 Treaty revision (2007):**
    - **Removed requirement for Bhutan to seek India's guidance** in external affairs, promoting greater equality.
    - **Revised Article 2** requires **close cooperation and mutual prevention of territory use** for activities harmful to each other's security.

Significance of India-Bhutan Bilateral Relation

- **For India**
    - **Strategic Buffer & Security:** Bhutan's location **buffers India from China; Doklam critical for safeguarding the Siliguri Corridor.**
    - **Energy Security**: Key hydropower partner; **India associated with 5 HEPs totaling 2,986 MW (Chukha, Kurichhu, Tala, Mangdechhu, Punatsangchhu-II).**
    - **Economic Access:** Bhutan is one of India's top trading partners in the **region.**
    - **Internationalisation of BHIM UPI**: Bhutan first to adopt **UPI QR standards; RuPay fully interoperable**
- **For Bhutan**
    - **Economic Development Partner**: India **contributed 73% of external grant in Bhutan's 12th FYP.**
    - **Revenue from Power Trade**: Electricity exports to India generate **~40% of revenue and 25% of GDP.**
    - **Transit and Market Access**: 2016 Trade, **Commerce & Transit Agreement ensures free trade & duty-free transit to third countries.**
    - **Financial Stability Support**: RBI currency swap **(₹1,500 crore) and standby credit facilities.**
    - **Education & Capacity Building**: 1,500+ scholarships and **~325 ITEC training slots annually**.

- **Space Cooperation**: Joint development of **India–Bhutan SAT (2022).**
- **Defence Cooperation**: IMTRAT trains **Bhutanese security forces**.

Challenges in India-Bhutan Relations

- **Chinese pressure rising**: Border **deal push and new Tibet infrastructure** challenge India's leverage.
- **Doklam concern**: China's package deal **involving Doklam threatens India's security interests**.
- **Economic sensitivities**: Perception of Indian **dominance and limited local job gains.**
- **Hydropower debt worries**: Shift toward **loan-heavy financing** raises Bhutan's debt concerns.

Conclusion

The India-Bhutan relationship is a unique partnership founded on **shared spiritual heritage and deep mutual trust**, historically cemented by the 1949 Treaty and its revised 2007 version. Recent visits demonstrate India's commitment to remaining a **steadfast and substantive partner** through massive financial commitments and crucial connectivity projects.

3.8. KEYWORDS

Net Security Provider	First Responder	Vision MAHASAGAR	Strategic Resetting / Realpolitik Engagement
Gujral Doctrine	Strategic Buffer	Perception Management	Track 1.5 and Track II Diplomacy
Adaptive Water Management	Weaponization of Water	Radicalisation Spillovers	Strategic Realignment
China-led Trilateral Nexus			

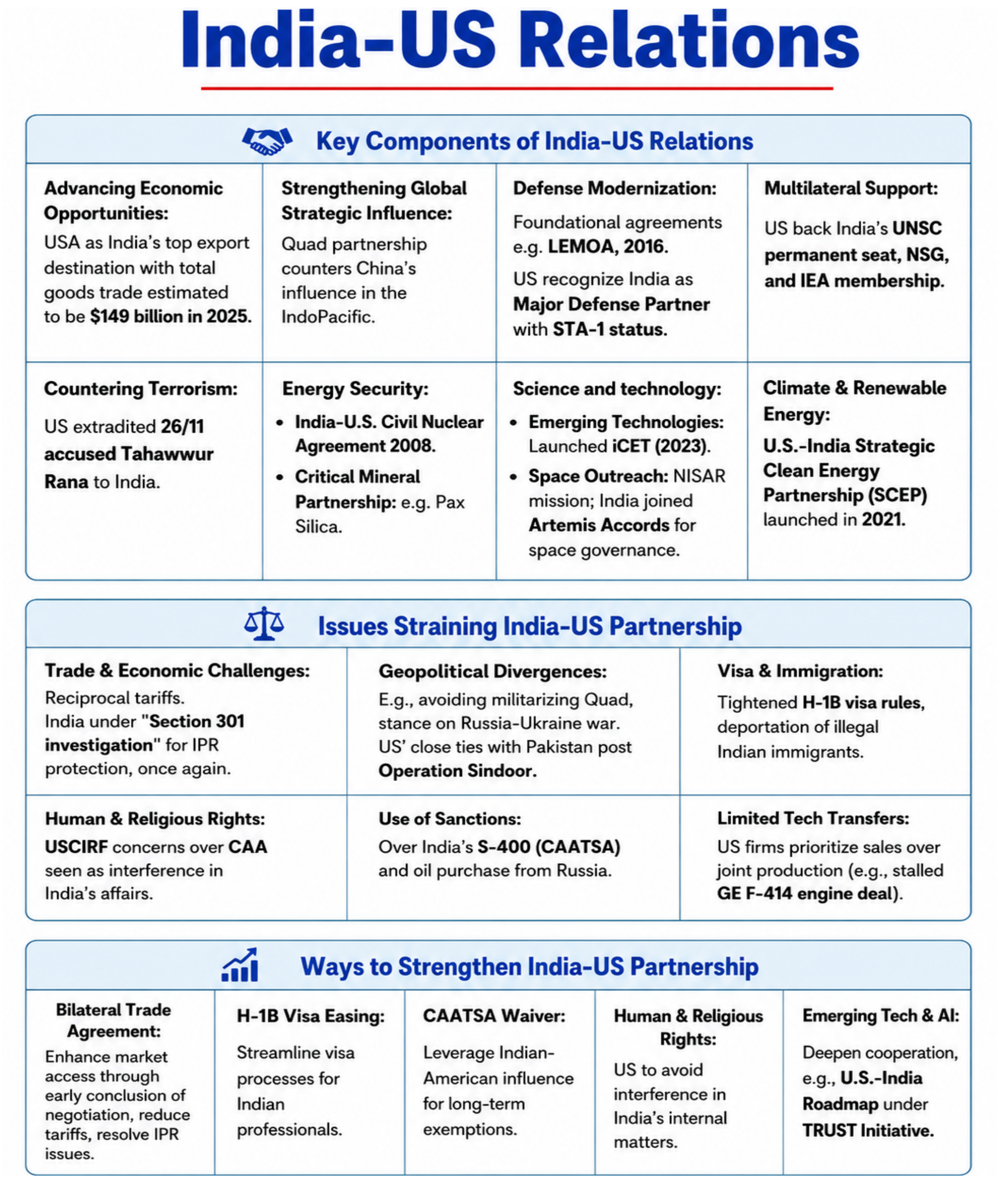
3.9. PRACTICE QUESTION

The recent political instability and strategic realignment in Bangladesh present complex security and diplomatic challenges for India. In light of these developments discuss the proactive measures India should adopt to safeguard its strategic interests.

Introduction	Body Part-1	Body Part-2	Conclusion
Briefly highlight the significance of Bangladesh in India's neighbourhood policy and how recent political developments have implications for India's strategic interests.	Discuss the security, geopolitical, economic, connectivity, and diplomatic challenges arising from political instability and strategic realignments in Bangladesh.	Examine the diplomatic, security, economic, developmental, and people-centric measures India should adopt to protect and advance its strategic interests.	Emphasize the need for a balanced approach combining strategic vigilance, constructive engagement, and regional cooperation to ensure a stable and mutually beneficial India–Bangladesh relationship.

4. BILATERAL GROUPING AND AGREEMENTS INVOLVING INDIA AND/OR AFFECTING INDIA

4.1. INDIA-US RELATIONS AT A GLANCE



India-US Relations

Key Components of India-US Relations

Advancing Economic Opportunities: USA as India's top export destination with total goods trade estimated to be **$149 billion in 2025.**	**Strengthening Global Strategic Influence:** Quad partnership counters China's influence in the IndoPacific.	**Defense Modernization:** Foundational agreements e.g. **LEMOA, 2016.** US recognize India as **Major Defense Partner** with **STA-1 status.**	**Multilateral Support:** US back India's **UNSC permanent seat, NSG, and IEA membership.**
Countering Terrorism: US extradited **26/11 accused Tahawwur Rana** to India.	**Energy Security:** • **India-U.S. Civil Nuclear Agreement 2008.** • **Critical Mineral Partnership:** e.g. Pax Silica.	**Science and technology:** • **Emerging Technologies:** Launched **iCET (2023).** • **Space Outreach:** NISAR mission; India joined **Artemis Accords** for space governance.	**Climate & Renewable Energy:** **U.S.-India Strategic Clean Energy Partnership (SCEP)** launched in **2021.**

Issues Straining India-US Partnership

Trade & Economic Challenges: Reciprocal tariffs. India under "**Section 301 investigation**" for IPR protection, once again.	**Geopolitical Divergences:** E.g., avoiding militarizing Quad, stance on Russia-Ukraine war. US' close ties with Pakistan post **Operation Sindoor.**	**Visa & Immigration:** Tightened **H-1B visa rules,** deportation of illegal Indian immigrants.
Human & Religious Rights: **USCIRF** concerns over **CAA** seen as interference in India's affairs.	**Use of Sanctions:** Over India's **S-400 (CAATSA)** and oil purchase from Russia.	**Limited Tech Transfers:** US firms prioritize sales over joint production (e.g., stalled **GE F-414 engine deal**).

Ways to Strengthen India-US Partnership

Bilateral Trade Agreement: Enhance market access through early conclusion of negotiation, reduce tariffs, resolve IPR issues.	**H-1B Visa Easing:** Streamline visa processes for Indian professionals.	**CAATSA Waiver:** Leverage Indian-American influence for long-term exemptions.	**Human & Religious Rights:** US to avoid interference in India's internal matters.	**Emerging Tech & AI:** Deepen cooperation, e.g., **U.S.-India Roadmap** under **TRUST Initiative.**

4.1.1. INDIA-US DEFENSE TIES

Why in the News?

Recently, India and the US have signed a **10-year framework pact for defense partnership.**

More on the News

- Follows previous **10-year Framework Agreements signed in 2005 and 2015.**
- The US approved sales of **Javelin anti-tank missiles, Excalibur guided artillery munitions, and related equipment to India.**

India-US Defense Ties

- **History:** Cooperation began in 1962 during the **Sino-Indian War with US aid in aircraft, weapons, and training.**
- **Dialogue Mechanism:**
  - **Apex:** 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue **(MEA & MoD with US Secretary of State & Defense).**
  - **Others:** Defense Policy Group (DPG), Military Cooperation Group (MCG), **Defense Joint Working Group (DJWG).**
- **Foundational Agreements:**
  - **General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA, 2002):** Sharing classified info **between governments and firms**.
  - **Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA, 2016)**: Access to each other's bases **for refueling/replenishment.**
  - **Communications, Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA, 2018**): Exchange of encrypted **communications/data.**
  - **Basic Exchange and Communications Agreement (BECA,** 2020): Sharing advanced geospatial **data for navigation/missile targeting.**
- **Defense Trade**:
  - **Status**: India designated Major Defense Partner (2016).
  - **Trade Facilitation**: STA-1 (2018) allows faster access to US military tech.
  - **Major Acquisitions**: P-8I, C-17, Apache, MH-60R, M777 howitzers.
- **Joint Exercises & Interoperability:**
  - **Bilateral:** Yudh Abhyas, Vajra Prahar, Cope India, Tiger Triumph.
  - **Multilateral**: Malabar, RIMPAC, Red Flag.

Significance of India US Defense Ties

- **Strategic Balance in Indo-Pacific:** Strengthens **India's ability to counter China, e.g.** Malabar Exercise.
- **Technology & Industrial Partnership**: Access to advanced **military tech and co-production boosts defense industrial base (e.g., P-8I, GE F-414 engines**).
- **Logistics & Global Reach**: LEMOA expands operational **footprint through mutual facility access**.
- **Economic & Capability Gains**: Defense **trade >$20B enhances jobs, supply chains, and tech ecosystems.**
- **Diversification Beyond Russia**: Reduces dependence on **Russian platforms and broadens tech options.**

Key irritants in India-US Defense ties

- **Strategic Autonomy:** India's engagement with both US and Russia causes friction; **US pressure over Russian arms/oil. Ex: CAATSA concerns during S-400 deal.**
- **Limited Technology Access**: US export controls restrict advanced tech despite STA-1**. Ex: Jet-engine components need US licenses.**
- **Different Regional Priorities**: US engagement with Pakistan creates discomfort. **Ex: High-level US-Pakistan military meetings post-Operation Sindoor.**
- **Russian Legacy Systems**: Large Russian inventory complicates interoperability with US platforms. **Ex: S-400, Su-30MKI with Apache helicopters.**

- **Unpredictable US Politics:** Domestic politics can delay defense deals. **Ex: MQ-9B drone deal stalled by US Congress.**
- **Shifting Great-Power Dynamics:** US–Russia thaw or **Russia–China ties affect India's choices**. **Ex**: **Russia exploring new defense links with Pakistan.**

Conclusion

The renewed 10-year defense framework provides an opportunity to shift India-US ties **from a buyer-seller dynamic to a genuine strategic and industrial partnership**. By deepening co-development, easing technology transfer barriers, and aligning cooperation with India's strategic autonomy, the relationship can contribute to a stable balance of power in the Indo-Pacific while strengthening India's long-term defense self-reliance and global security role.

4.2. INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS

Why in the News?

India and Russia marked the **25th anniversary of their Strategic Partnership** Declaration in 2025.

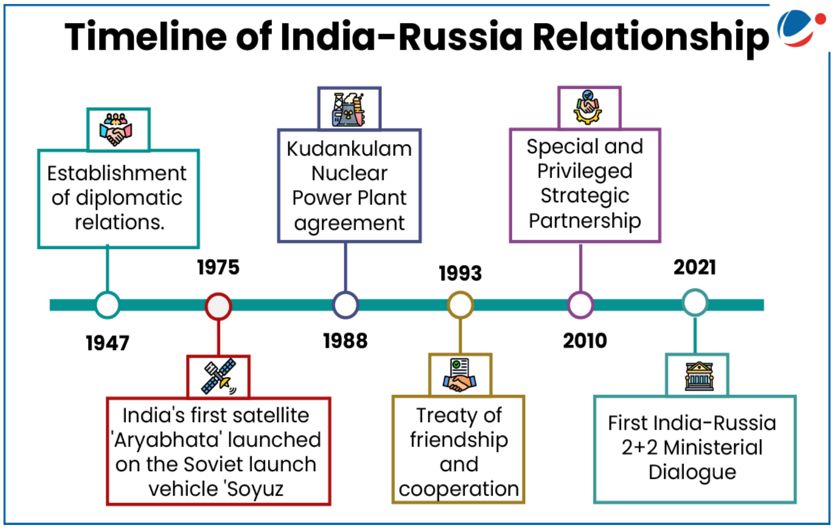
Russia
ATLANTIC OCEAN
ARCTIC OCEAN
FINLAND
ESTONIA
BELARUS
LITHUANIA
LATVIA
MOSCOW
RUSSIA
UNITED STATES
UKRAINE
KAZAKHSTAN
MONGOLIA
CHINA
JAPAN
PACIFIC OCEAN

More on the News

- The Declaration was **signed in 2000.**
- It created a **new framework** that deepened cooperation in **political, security, economic, defence, and cultural fields.**

Core pillars of the India-Russia partnership:

- **Political & Diplomatic Convergence:** Annual summits like **the 2+2 dialogue,** and **coordination in UN, G20, BRICS, SCO**.
  - Russia supports **India's UNSC permanent seat bid**.
- **Defence & Security**: Russia remains **India's top arms supplier** (36% of imports, SIPRI).
  - Joint development like **BrahMos; Exercises** INDRA and Avia Indra**.**
  - **Reciprocal Exchange of Logistic Support (RELOS) pact** has recently become operational.
- **Energy Security:** Russia is **India's largest crude supplier**, offering discounted oil.
  - Indian firms invest in the **Russian Far East; cooperation in nuclear** projects like Kudankulam.
- **Trade & Economic:** Bilateral trade reached **USD 68.7 bn in FY 2024–25,** with a target of USD 100 bn by 2030.
  - India exports **pharma, chemicals, and steel**;
  - 90% of trade uses rupee-ruble mechanisms.
- **Connectivity:** Projects like **INSTC, the Northern Sea Route, and the Chennai–Vladivostok corridor**.
- **Technology:** E.g. **Gaganyaan human spaceflight mission.**
- **Cultural Ties**: Cinema, ballet**,** and yoga**.**


Timeline of India-Russia Relationship
Establishment of diplomatic relations.
1947
1975
India's first satellite 'Aryabhata' launched on the Soviet launch vehicle 'Soyuz
Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant agreement
1988
1993
Treaty of friendship and cooperation
Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership
2010
2021
First India-Russia 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue

Challenges in the India–Russia Relations

- **Trade Imbalance in favour of Russia**: Indian exports were only USD 4.88 bn.
- **Rupee Surplus Issue** due to trade imbalance **in Special Rupee Vostro Accounts,** which Russia cannot use internationally due to financial restrictions.
- **Declining Defence Imports:** India is **diversifying with US, France, etc.** along with **indigenisation**.
- **Diverging Geopolitical Priorities:**
  - **India–US ties** (e.g. **Quad); Russia–China proximity** (e.g. no limits partnership); **Russia–Pakistan outreach** (e.g. counterterror drills**)**.
- **U.S. Sanctions Pressure**: E.g. No major defence deals since the **S-400 due to CAATSA.**

How India is balancing its relation with Russia and USA?

- **Strategic Autonomy**: India maintains **flexibility and avoids** taking sides. E.g.It abstained on UNSC resolutions **condemning Russia's actions** in Ukraine.
- **National-Interest–Driven Ties**: Quiet diplomacy in BRICS, SCO, and G20 **to act as a bridge between rival blocs.**
- **Internationalization of Rupee**: E.g. **Rupee–Rouble mechanisms** and rupee trade to navigate sanctions.

Way Forward

- **Enhancing Mutual Trust**: Rebuild confidence despite **Russia–China and India–US alignments**.
- **Tier-II Diplomacy:** Boost academia, **youth links, and media presence.**
- **Diversifying Trade:** Move **beyond oil into IT**, textiles, and agriculture.
- **Joint Development**: Expand collaboration on advanced defence technologies.
- **Finalizing Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)**: Fast-track the agreement.

Etc.

Conclusion

The future of India–Russia relations depends on both nations' ability to adapt their partnership to emerging global realities expanding beyond defence and energy into technology, innovation, and people-to-people links.

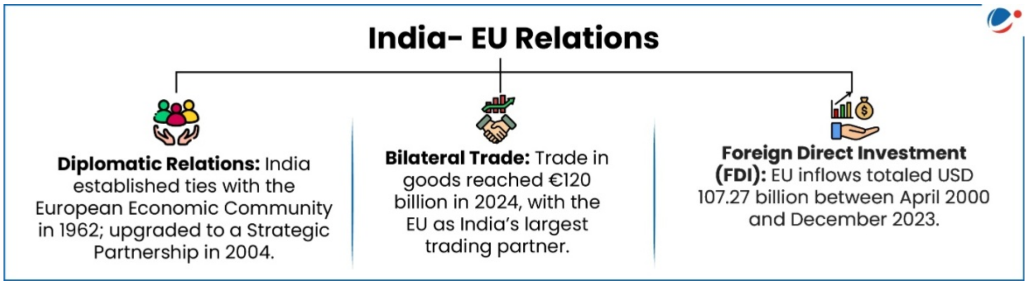
4.3. INDIA-EUROPE RELATIONS

4.3.1. INDIA–EU FTA

Why in the News?

India and the EU concluded negotiations for a **Free Trade Agreement (FTA), called the "Mother of all deals," strengthening strategic economic ties.**

More on the news



India- EU Relations

Diplomatic Relations: India established ties with the European Economic Community in 1962; upgraded to a Strategic Partnership in 2004.

Bilateral Trade: Trade in goods reached €120 billion in 2024, with the EU as India's largest trading partner.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): EU inflows totaled USD 107.27 billion between April 2000 and December 2023.

- Announced at the **16th India–EU Summit**, making the EU **India's 22nd FTA partner**.
- Talks began in **2007, paused in 2013, and resumed in 2022.**
- The agreement will **undergo legal review, EU approval, and Indian ratification** before implementation.
- The summit also signed the **EU–India Security and Defence Partnership (SDP**), EU's **third SDP in Asia** after **Japan and South Korea.**

EU: Key Features and Relations with India

- **About:** Economic–political **single market** allowing free movement of **goods, services, capital, and people.**
- **Founded**: 1951 by six countries**; now 27 members (UK exited in 2020).**
- **Main Institutions**: European Parliament, European Council, European Commission, Court of Justice, Court of Auditors.
- **Key Features**
    - **Elections**: European Parliament members elected **every five years.**
    - **Schengen Area**: Enables **passport-free travel** across most EU states (except Cyprus and Ireland).
    - **Single Currency**: Euro (1999) used by **21 EU countries** in the Eurozone.
- **India–EU Relations**
    - **India and the EU are the 4th and 2nd largest economies**, together accounting for **~25% of global GDP and one-third** of global trade
    - **Diplomatic Relations:** India was amongst the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with the European Economic Community in **1962**.
        - In **2004** their relationship was upgraded to a **Strategic Partnership**.
    - **Bilateral Trade:** Trade in goods between India and the EU reached **€120 billion** in 2024.
        - EU being **India's largest trading partner** in goods.
        - **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):** Cumulative inflows from EU valued at **USD 107.27 billion** between April 2000 and December 2023.

EUROPEAN UNION

SWEDEN
FINLAND
ESTONIA
LATVIA
DENMARK
LITHUANIA
IRELAND
NETHERLANDS
GERMANY
POLAND
BELGIUM
CZECH REPUBLIC
LUX.
SLOVAKIA
FRANCE
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
SLOVENIA
ROMANIA
CROATIA
BULGARIA
ITALY
PORTUGAL
SPAIN
GREECE
MALTA
CYPRUS

Key Features of India-EU FTA

- **EU Market Access**: 97% tariff lines (99.5% trade) with duty removal for labour sectors.
- **Sector Boost:** Textiles, leather, marine, footwear, chemicals get zero-duty access.
- **India Access for EU:** 92% tariff lines opened; ~50% with immediate cuts.
- **Mobility**: Social security pacts and post-study work options for Indians.
- **Services Trade**: EU opens 144 subsectors incl. IT/ITeS, professionals.
- **MFN Status**: India and the European Union agreed to grant each other Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status **for five years.**
- **Other Gains**: Better agri access, AYUSH support, stronger IP, SPS/TBT cooperation.

Significance of India–EU FTA

- **India's Export Boom**: India's secures market access for **99% of exports.**
- **Addressing Shared Global concerns**: China's assertiveness and **American unilateralism, cooperation in Indo-Pacific.**
- **Diversification amid transatlantic uncertainty**: Hedging against protectionism.
- **Others**: Deeper Integration in global value chain, **Catering to Sharing Interests, sustainable transformation.**

Key Issues with EU-India FTA

- **Implementation Delays**: EU approvals may **delay impact by 5–10 years.**

- **Rules of Origin**: Strict norms to prevent **third-country misuse**.
- **CBAM Impact**: EU carbon tax raises costs for Indian exports.
- **Other: Services Barriers, Data Security**.

Conclusion

While India–EU FTA, complemented by **defence and security cooperation framework,** may not rewrite global trade and growth overnight, but it **meaningfully reshapes movement of trade, investment, and supply chains** in a new era of globalization.

Related News: New Strategic EU-India Agenda

The European Council has approved the EU-India Strategic Agenda, identifying **five priority pillars**.

- **Prosperity & Sustainability**: Economic growth, jobs, decarbonization, supply chains; **aims to finalize FTA and Investment Protection Agreement.**
- **Technology & Innovation**: Cooperation on emerging tech, **digital infrastructure, and research via Trade & Technology Council and Horizon Europe.**
- **Security & Defence**: Tackle global threats and geopolitical tensions; **coordinate on Indo-Pacific** and maritime rules.
- **Connectivity & Global Issues**: Enhance regional connectivity and **global governance; support projects like IMEC and Global Gateway.**
- **Enablers**: Promote skills mobility, knowledge exchange, **business engagement, and institutional cooperation across all pillars.**

4.3.2. INDIA-EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION TRADE AND ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (TEPA)

Why in the News?

The India–European Free Trade Association (EFTA) Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA), signed on 10 March 2024, has officially come into force from 1 October 2025.

About EFTA

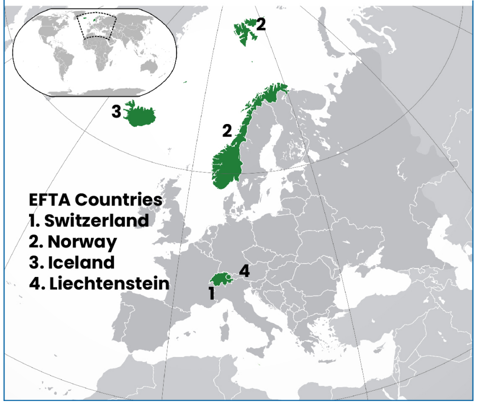
Overview: Intergovernmental organisation established in 1960 to promote free trade and economic integration globally.

- **Members:** Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland (in Schengen but not EU).
- **Economy & Population**: 14 million people; combined GDP over $3 trillion.
- **India-EFTA Relations**: India is EFTA's fifth-largest trading partner; Switzerland leads trade with India, followed by Norway**.**

Key Features of the Agreement

- **Investment & Jobs:** EFTA to invest **USD 100 billion in India over 15 years, creating 1 million direct jobs**.
- **Market Access:** For Indian exporters in **machinery, textiles,** etc. **E.g.** concessions on **92.2% tariff lines, covering 99.6% of India's exports.**
- **Services & Mobility**: E.g. **Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) for professions (nursing, CA, architecture, etc.**).
- **IPR Protection:** TRIPS-level commitments while **safeguarding generic medicines** and **preventing patent evergreening**.
- **Sustainability & Ease of Trade**: Promotes transparency, **simplified procedures, and inclusive development.**

EFTA countries



- **Technology Gains**: Access to advanced tech in **engineering, healthcare,** etc.
- **Global Standing**: Enhances India's position as **an equal partner to advanced economies**.

Issues with the agreement

- **Limited Benefits for India:** Due to **pre-existing low tariff rates in the EFTA bloc**.
- **Trade imbalances**: **India exports USD 1.97 billion** and **imports USD 22.44 billion** worth of goods.
- **Limitations of the pact**: Complex web of **tariffs, quality standards, and approval requirements.**
    - Key agricultural items **including dairy, soya, coal, etc., placed** on the **exclusion list**.
- **Limited Investment Options:** Deal **excludes pension and sovereign wealth funds.**

Conclusion

TEPA serves as both an **economic** and **diplomatic asset** and is India's most forward-looking deal. In an era where trade is increasingly tied to **resilience, supply chain diversification, and climate commitments**, it sets a **new benchmark** for future global partnerships.

4.3.3. INDIA-UK RELATIONS

Why in the News?

India and the UK signed the **Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA**), strengthening their partnership.

More in the News

- Major developments apart from CETA**:**
    - **India-UK Vision 2035** will guide cooperation over the **next decade in various sectors.**
    - **Defence Industrial Roadmap** was adopted for **joint work on defence products**.

Key Highlights of the CETA

- **Comprehensive Tariff Elimination and Market Access**
    - **Over 99% of tariff lines eliminated**, nearly India's whole trade basket.
        - India opened **89.5% of tariff lines, covering 91% of UK exports.**
    - **Sensitive sectors** (dairy, cereals, gold, jewellery, etc.) protected.
    - **Bilateral safeguards** to prevent harmful import surges.
- **Services: Wider access** for Indian IT, finance, education, healthcare.
- **Mutual Recognition and Professional Mobility**
    - **Professional qualifications** (nursing, accountancy, architecture, etc.) to be mutually recognised within a year.
    - UK allows Indian professionals, investors **stays from 90 days up to 3 years.**
    - **Double Contribution Convention exempts Indian workers** and employers from UK social security for 3 years.
    - **Exporters may self-certify product origin**; small consignments under £1,000 need no documents; rules align with India's supply chains.

India–UK Vision 2035 (Strategic Partnership Roadmap)

- **Strategic Vision by 2035:** Partnerships will transform India–UK relations, focusing on strategic goals, innovation, and real benefits.
- **Partnership Framework: Cooperation on six pillars** (Trade - Technology - Defence - Climate - Education - People-to-People Ties).
- **Growth and Trade**: Raise trade volumes, Complete Bilateral Investment Treaty, Improve capital market links, Boost green investments, innovation Support startups.
- **Technology Innovation:** AI/machine learning links 5G/6G telecom cooperation Work on critical minerals, semiconductors, Quantum computing, biotech research, Space, health tech.

- **Defence and Security:** 10-year Defence Roadmap, Joint defence technology, Strengthen Indo-Pacific security, Counter-terror and cyber efforts Joint training.
- **Climate and Energy:** Increase climate finance**,** Expand offshore wind**,** Develop green hydrogen**,** Nuclear energy cooperation**,** clean transport, Restore ecosystems.
- **Education and Skills Partnership:** UK campuses in India**,** Joint degrees**,** Green skills programs**,** More youth and cultural exchanges.

Significance of CETA for India

- **Export growth**: Exports in textiles, jewelry, machinery expected to rise 20-40%.
- **Geographical Indication protection**: GI products like feni, toddy, Nashik wine protected.
- **Market Access**: UK's $37.5 billion agricultural market opened; over 95% of agricultural and processed food items duty-free.
- **Worker Benefits:** Labour rights ensured, with fair tribunals and enforcement; women benefit from non-discrimination and gender equality.
- **MSME and regional growth**: Trade boost aids hubs like Tiruppur (textiles), Kolkata (leather), Surat–Bharuch (chemicals).

Significance of India-UK Relations

- **Economic Cooperation**: Bilateral trade at **USD 56 billion**; target to double by 2030.
  - UK is 6th largest investor in India with **$35 billion equity to Sept 2024.**
- **Geo-Political:** Cooperation in **UN, UNSC, G20, Commonwealth**, Indo-Pacific; UK supports India's UNSC permanent seat bid.
- **Defence Cooperation**: Regular exercises including **Konkan (naval), Cobra Warrior (air), Ajeya Warrior (army).**
- **Indian Diaspora**: UK hosts **1.864 million** Indians (2021 Census).
- **Education cooperation**: UK universities **opening Indian campuses**; **Southampton's Gurugram campus** first under New Education Policy. About **170,000 Indian students** study in UK.
- **Health Cooperation**: **Joint COVID-19 vaccine R&D** (AstraZeneca and Serum Institute); India-UK agreement supports healthcare **workforce recruitment and training.**

Concerns in India-UK Relations

- **Divergent Foreign Policy Positions**: Differing views on the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
- **UK's Domestic Politics:** UK debates on Kashmir and India's internal issues cause friction, affecting diaspora ties.
- **Khalistan Separatism**: India worries about pro-Khalistan activities in the UK threatening its sovereignty.
- **Extradition hurdles:** Legal delays keep fugitives like Vijay Mallya in the UK, straining trust.

Conclusion

The CETA, under India-UK Vision 2035, is a key milestone boosting trade, technology, defence, climate, and education ties. With the **UK as a P5, G7, Five Eyes member and India as fastest-growing** major economy, both **are at a strategic inflection point**. Leveraging synergies **amid global volatility, they aim to elevate partnership and tackle challenges.**

4.3.4. INDIA-GERMANY RELATIONS

Why in the News?

India and Germany signed Agreements during the **German Chancellor's visit, as India–Germany marked 25 years of Strategic Partnership and 75 years of diplomatic ties.**

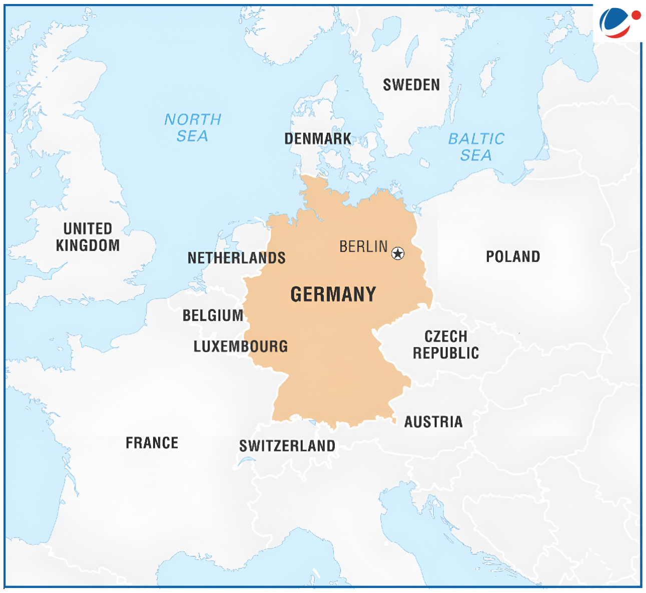
Evolution of Bilateral Relations

- **Early Phase (1950s–1990s):** Primarily economic and developmental cooperation.

- **2000 onwards**: Upgradation to Strategic Partnership.
- **Recent Shift**: From "trade-only" to comprehensive partnership (defence, technology, Indo-Pacific, security).
- **Shared Values**: Democracy, rule of law, multilateralism, rules-based international order.

Key Outcomes during the visit

- **Defence**: Roadmap for defence cooperation**, co-development and co-production**; Germany to join exercises like **MILAN and Tarang Shakti**; Track 1.5 dialogue launched.
- **Trade**: Cooperation on **semiconductors and critical minerals** for resilient supply chains.
- **Mobility:** Visa-free transit for **Indian passport holders**.
- **Other:** New Indo-Pacific **consultation and education partnership** roadmap.



Other Aspects of India–Germany Relations

- **Trade**: Over $50 billion in 2024; Germany is **9th-largest FDI investor in India**.
- **Environment**: Green and **Sustainable Development Partnership (GSDP).**
- **Technology**: Cooperation via **Indo-German Science and Technology Centre (IGSTC).**
- **Areas of Convergence:** Rules-based international order; Countering unilateralism and supply chain vulnerabilities; UNSC Reform (mutual support).

Challenges

- **Geopolitical**: Germany's strong pro-Ukraine stance vs. India's strategic autonomy on Russia.
- **Trade Barriers**: EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), non-tariff barriers, data localisation issues.

Way Forward

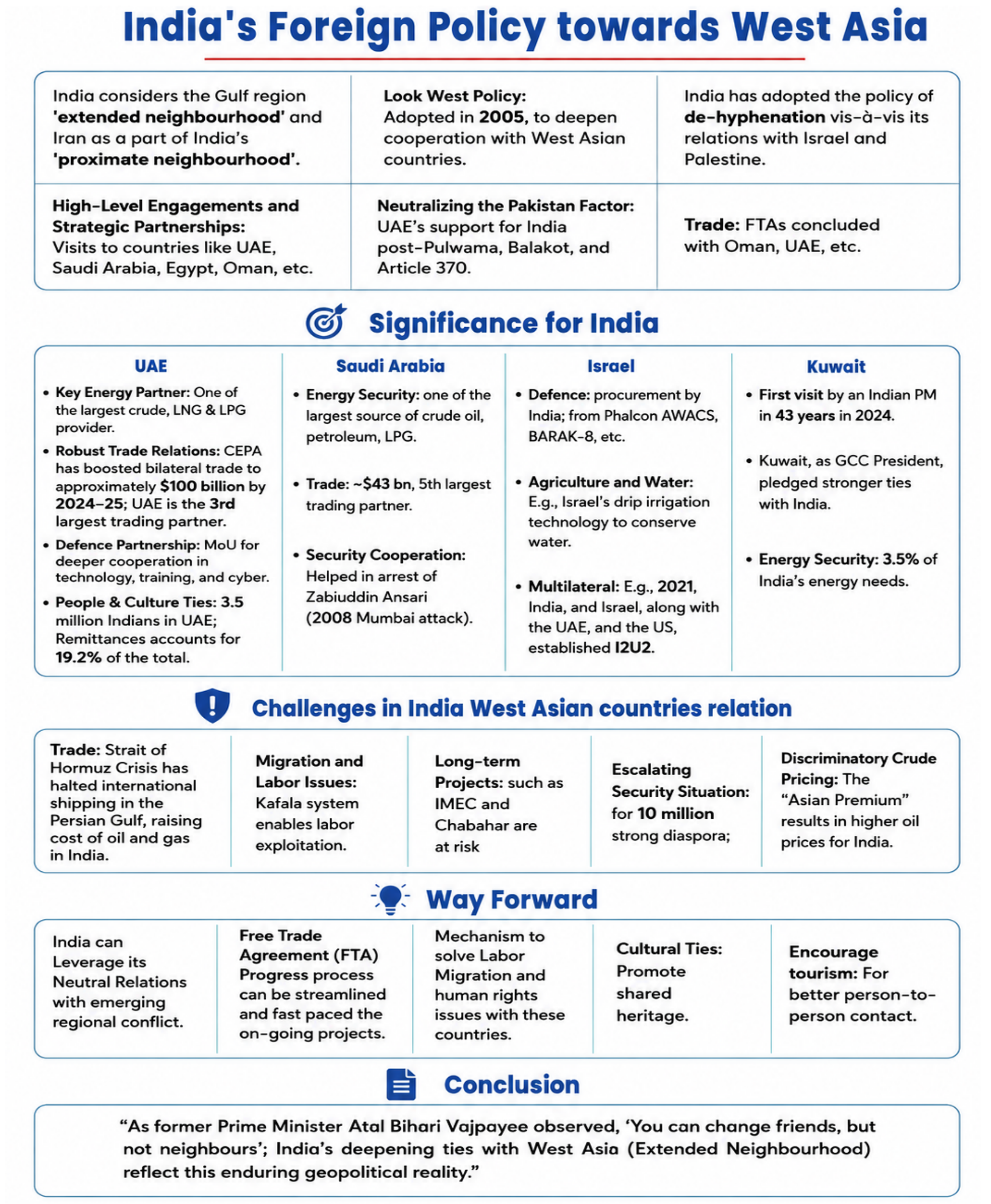
- Expand cooperation in **emerging technologies** (AI, quantum, semiconductors).
- Leverage **German expertise** for **India's skill development and vocational training**.
- Strengthen **triangular development projects in** in **Africa & Global South**.
- Use **Germany as gateway for stronger India-EU strategic partnership**.

Conclusion

The recent agreements during the German Chancellor's visit reflect the maturing of India-Germany Strategic Partnership in line with the changing global order marked by **supply chain disruptions, technological competition, and Indo-Pacific realignments.** While challenges remain, the partnership holds immense potential to advance India's goals of strategic autonomy, economic resilience, and multipolar world order."

4.4. INDIA-WEST ASIA RELATIONS

4.4.1. INDIA AND WEST ASIAN COUNTRIES AT A GLANCE



India's Foreign Policy towards West Asia

India considers the Gulf region **'extended neighbourhood'** and Iran as a part of India's **'proximate neighbourhood'**.

Look West Policy: Adopted in **2005**, to deepen cooperation with West Asian countries.

India has adopted the policy of **de-hyphenation** vis-à-vis its relations with Israel and Palestine.

High-Level Engagements and Strategic Partnerships: Visits to countries like UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Oman, etc.

Neutralizing the Pakistan Factor: UAE's support for India post-Pulwama, Balakot, and Article 370.

Trade: FTAs concluded with Oman, UAE, etc.

Significance for India

UAE

- **Key Energy Partner:** One of the largest crude, LNG & LPG provider.
- **Robust Trade Relations:** CEPA has boosted bilateral trade to approximately **$100 billion** by **2024-25**; UAE is the **3rd** largest trading partner.
- **Defence Partnership:** MoU for deeper cooperation in technology, training, and cyber.
- **People & Culture Ties: 3.5** million Indians in UAE; Remittances accounts for **19.2%** of the total.

Saudi Arabia

- **Energy Security:** one of the largest source of crude oil, petroleum, LPG.
- **Trade: ~$43 bn**, 5th largest trading partner.
- **Security Cooperation:** Helped in arrest of Zabiuddin Ansari (2008 Mumbai attack).

Israel

- **Defence:** procurement by India; from Phalcon AWACS, BARAK-8, etc.
- **Agriculture and Water:** E.g., Israel's drip irrigation technology to conserve water.
- **Multilateral:** E.g., 2021, India, and Israel, along with the UAE, and the US, established **I2U2**.

Kuwait

- **First visit** by an Indian PM in **43 years** in **2024**.
- Kuwait, as GCC President, pledged stronger ties with India.
- **Energy Security: 3.5%** of India's energy needs.

Challenges in India West Asian countries relation

Trade: Strait of Hormuz Crisis has halted international shipping in the Persian Gulf, raising cost of oil and gas in India.

Migration and Labor Issues: Kafala system enables labor exploitation.

Long-term Projects: such as IMEC and Chabahar are at risk

Escalating Security Situation: for **10 million** strong diaspora;

Discriminatory Crude Pricing: The "Asian Premium" results in higher oil prices for India.

Way Forward

India can Leverage its Neutral Relations with emerging regional conflict.

Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Progress process can be streamlined and fast paced the on-going projects.

Mechanism to solve Labor Migration and human rights issues with these countries.

Cultural Ties: Promote shared heritage.

Encourage tourism: For better person-to-person contact.

Conclusion

"As former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee observed, 'You can change friends, but not neighbours'; India's deepening ties with West Asia (Extended Neighbourhood) reflect this enduring geopolitical reality."

4.4.2. INDIA-ISRAEL RELATIONS

Why in the News?

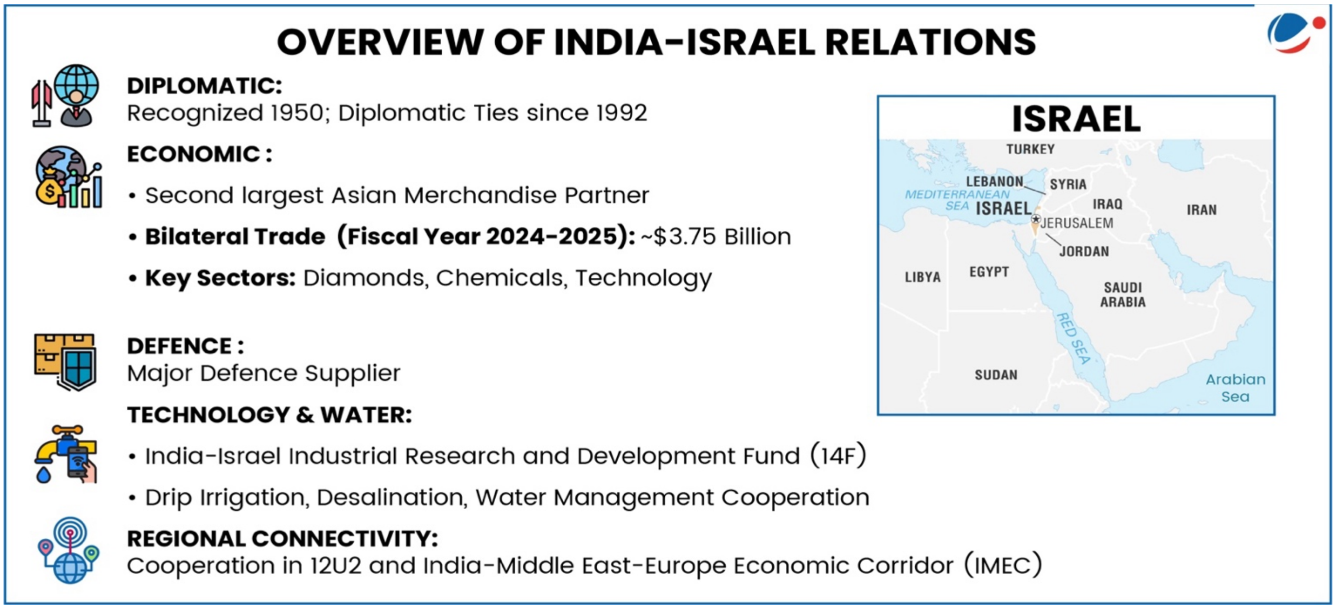
During PM's recent visit to Israel, India & Israel agreed to deepen bilateral cooperation.

Key Outcomes of Visit

- Ties upgraded to **"Special Strategic Partnership for Peace, Innovation & Prosperity".**
- **New initiative on Critical & Emerging Technologies (CET)** covering AI, cybersecurity, semiconductors, quantum, biotechnology and space; MoU on Artificial Intelligence.
- **Labour mobility** quota of up to 50,000 Indian workers over next 5 years.
- **Cybersecurity roadmap** and India–Israel Centre of Excellence.
- **Agriculture partnership** with India–Israel Innovation Centre (IINCA) and 20 joint fellowships.
- **Others:** UPI linkage; Academic Cooperation Forum; Parliamentary Friendship Group etc.

Evolving co-operation between India-Israel

- **Economic:** Bilateral trade was **USD 6.53 billion** (excluding defense) with India's exports surplus in FY 2023-24.
- **Regional co-operation: I2U2 Partnership's** first summit held in 2022, with India, Israel, UAE, and US participation.
- **Innovation & Science Technology:** E.g., **India-Israel Industrial R&D and Innovation Fund (I4F)** for 5 years (2023–27).
- **Defence:** Co-developed the **Barak-8 missile system**, regular port calls in **Haifa**, etc.
- **Other:** Cultural Exchange Programme, cooperation in health and medicine, MoUs on agriculture and water resource management, etc.



OVERVIEW OF INDIA-ISRAEL RELATIONS

DIPLOMATIC:
Recognized 1950; Diplomatic Ties since 1992

ECONOMIC :
- Second largest Asian Merchandise Partner
- **Bilateral Trade (Fiscal Year 2024-2025):** ~$3.75 Billion
- **Key Sectors:** Diamonds, Chemicals, Technology

DEFENCE :
Major Defence Supplier

TECHNOLOGY & WATER:
- India-Israel Industrial Research and Development Fund (14F)
- Drip Irrigation, Desalination, Water Management Cooperation

REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY:
Cooperation in 12U2 and India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)

Conclusion

From defence to digital innovation, India–Israel ties exemplify **a future-ready strategic partnership** built on trust, technology, and mutual prosperity.

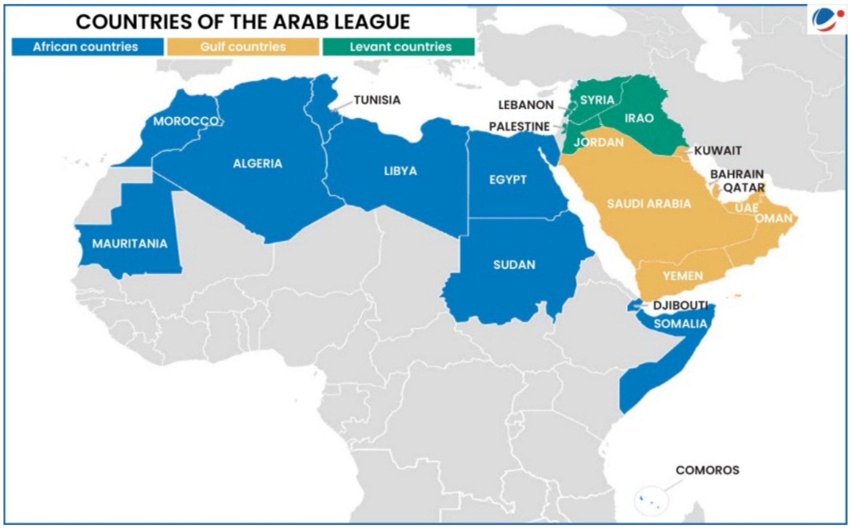
4.4.3. INDIA AND LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES (ARAB LEAGUE)

Why in the News?

Delhi Declaration was signed between India and Arab League with the participation of **Indian External Affairs Minister**, Foreign Ministers of **Arab States** and the Secretary-General of the **League of Arab States.**

Key Highlights of the Delhi Declaration

- **Peace and Security:** Support for **multilateralism**, respect for **sovereignty of states, counterterrorism efforts,** and reforms of **United Nations Security Council.**
- **Economic Stability and Security:** Declaration cited **Suez Canal–Red Sea Economic and Maritime Development Initiative (STREAM)** as a regional framework to **support economic integration.**
- **Key Country Specific Highlights: Palestine** (sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine, welcomed **2025 Sharm El-Sheikh Peace Summit** concerning ceasefire in Gaza); Yemen (condemned attacks by **Houthi militias**; protection of **vital Bab al-Mandab Strait**), etc.


COUNTRIES OF THE ARAB LEAGUE
African countries
Gulf countries
Levant countries
TUNISIA
MOROCCO
ALGERIA
LIBYA
EGYPT
MAURITANIA
SUDAN
LEBANON
PALESTINE
SYRIA
IRAQ
JORDAN
KUWAIT
BAHRAIN
QATAR
UAE
OMAN
SAUDI ARABIA
YEMEN
DJIBOUTI
SOMALIA
COMOROS

About Arab League

- **Origin: Intergovernmental organisation** encompassing all Arab states in **Middle East and North Africa**, established on **March 22, 1945,** following adoption of **Alexandria Protocol in 1944.**
- **Founding members**: Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Transjordan, and Yemen.

Importance of Arab League for India

- **Economic:** Trade between India and Arab States stands over **US$240 billion presently.**
  - India imports **over 47% of crude oil** from Arab League countries, and **50% of fertilisers and related products.**
- **Strategic Significance:** Most of India's external trade passes through the **Suez Canal, the Red Sea, and the Gulf of Aden.**
- **Diaspora:** Over **10 million Indian diaspora** live in Arab League nations.

4.4.4. GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL (GCC)

Why in the News?

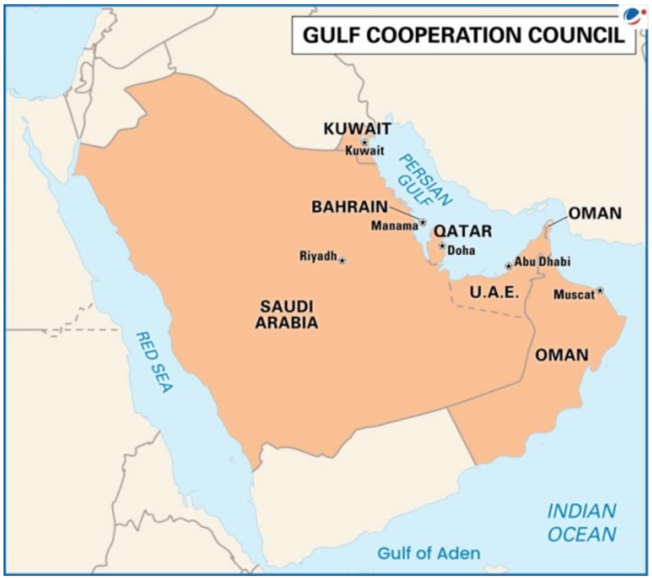
Terms of Reference were signed for India–GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in New Delhi.

Significance of India-GCC FTA for India

- **Unlock full potential** of economic ties with a **US$ 2.3 trillion GDP market;**
- Enhance People to people ties;
- Strengthens relations and **supply security** amid global uncertainties.

About GCC

- **Genesis: 25 May 1981** as a **six-nation bloc** (UAE; Bahrain; Saudi Arabia; Oman; Qatar; Kuwait).
- **Objective:** Effect coordination, integration and unity between member States.


GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL
KUWAIT
Kuwait
PERSIAN GULF
BAHRAIN
Manama
QATAR
Doha
Riyadh
Abu Dhabi
U.A.E.
Muscat
OMAN
OMAN
SAUDI ARABIA
RED SEA
INDIAN OCEAN
Gulf of Aden

India-GCC Relationship

- **Economic & Energy Core:** The GCC is **India's largest trading bloc** (US$ 178.56 billion in FY 2024-25) and supplies **70% of its crude oil**.
- **Defense Co-development:** Shifting from simple hardware exports to **jointly manufacturing advanced technologies**, including AI and drone systems through a **Joint Action Plan (2024-2028).**
- **Diaspora & Remittances:** Nearly **10 million Indians** in the Gulf send home over **US$ 50 billion annually**, making their safety during regional conflicts a top priority for New Delhi's crisis diplomacy.

Conclusion

The India–GCC FTA has the potential to transform a strong energy- and diaspora-driven partnership into a comprehensive strategic and economic alliance, advancing mutual prosperity, supply chain resilience, and regional stability.

4.5. INDIA-AFRICA RELATIONS

Why in the news?

The Prime Minister's visits to Namibia and Ghana **(July 2025) and Ethiopia (December 2025) highlighted India's growing engagement with Africa.**

Key developments during the visits

- India–Ethiopia ties were elevated to a **Strategic Partnership.**
- MoUs signed on setting up a **Data Centre at Ethiopia's Foreign Ministry** and debt restructuring under the **G20 Common Framework.**

Evolution of India- Africa relationship

- **Maritime Commerce**: Ancient trade links recorded in the **Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (1st century AD**).
- **Cultural Links**: African communities (**Siddis) migrated to India by the 12th century**.
- **Satyagraha**: Gandhi developed **Satyagraha in Africa**, influencing freedom movements.
- **Anti-Colonialism**: Nehru called Africa a **"sister continent"; India supported African sovereignty through NAM.**
- **Institutionalised Engagement**: Post-1991, **ties expanded economically via India–Africa Forum Summits, starting in 2008.**

Significance of India-Africa relations

For India

- **Strategic & Geopolitical**: Africa is a key partner in advancing **Global South interests and reforming multilateral institutions like the UN and WTO.**
  - The AU's **G20 membership strengthens this collective voice.**
- **Defence & Maritime Security**: Growing cooperation through **IORA, IOC, and joint exercises such as MILAN and Cutlass Express.**
  - India recently launched **Africa–India Key Maritime Engagement (AIKEYME).**
- **Economic & Minerals**: Africa offers a young market and critical minerals (cobalt, manganese, rare earths) vital **for manufacturing and green transition**.
  - Africa holds **~48% of global cobalt and ~47% of manganese reserves.**
- **Energy Security**: Africa has vast renewable potential in **solar, wind, and geothermal energy.**
  - India-led **International Solar Alliance** supports mini-grids and distributed solar projects in Africa.

For Africa

- **Trade & Investment**: India–Africa **trade crossed USD 100 billion (2024–25); India is Africa's third-largest trading partner and one of the top 5 investor.**
- **Peacekeeping**: India is Africa's fourth-largest **troop contributor to UN peacekeeping missions**.
- **Diaspora Linkages:** A 3+ million **Indian diaspora contributes** to Africa's economic growth.
- **Grassroots Development**: Projects like **Solar Mamas empower rural African** women through skills training.
- **Non-Prescriptive Aid**: India's demand-driven assistance follows the **Kampala Principles, respecting African priorities.**
- **Defence Cooperation**: India supplies **affordable military equipment** and training to African forces.

Emerging aspects of India-Africa relations: Digital partnership

- **Digital Connectivity**: India is sharing **India Stack solutions to expand banking** and e-commerce access, especially in rural areas.
  - **UPI/RuPay–based models** have been launched in Mauritius and Namibia.
- **Cyber Security**: MoUs with countries like **Egypt and Morocco strengthen cooperation on protecting digital infrastructure.**
- **Telecom Infrastructure:** Joint projects to expand undersea cables and **4G/5G networks, including the 2Africa Pearls subsea cable linking India, Africa, and Europe.**
- **Pan-African e-Network**: Launched in 2004, **it has enhanced tele-education and tele-medicine across Africa.**
- **Capacity Building**: ITEC and ICCR scholarships, **along with e-VidyaBharati & e-ArogyaBharati (e-VBAB), support skills, education, and health systems.**
- **Governance Solutions**: India offers e-governance tools **like DigiLocker.**
  - **Exampl**e: Smart Zambia Initiative **for digital public service delivery**.

Impediments in India- Africa relations

- **China Factor:** China's BRI-led investments **outpace India in scale and speed.**
- **Trade Concentration**: Nearly half of India's **exports go to a few countries like South Africa and Nigeria.**
- **Project Delays**: Indian-funded projects **face procedural, funding, and logistical hurdles.**
- **Global Governance Gap**: Africa lacks **permanent representation in key global institutions**.
- **Security Risks**: Conflict and instability in regions like the **Sahel and Horn of Africa** threaten Indian interests.
- **Strategic Paradox**: South–South cooperation rhetoric **often clashes with strategic and resource-driven goals**.

Indian initiatives for Africa

- **Asia–Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC**): India–Japan partnership for **sustainable development and connectivity (2017).**
- **Duty-Free Tariff Preference (DFTP**): Non-reciprocal market **access for African LDCs.**
- **Pan-African e-Network:** Strengthens tele-education and telemedicine.
- **Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme (IDEAS)**: USD 12 billion concessional Lines of Credit to 42 African countries.
- **Techno-Economic Approach to Africa-India Movement" (TEAM-9)**: Technology-led cooperation with **West Africa in health, food security, and telecom**.

Way forward

- **Economic Integration**: Align India's trade strategy with **AfCFTA by supporting regional value chains**.
- **Trade Diversification**: Expand beyond major partners like South Africa and Nigeria, targeting USD 200 billion trade by 2030.

- **"Mineral-to-Market" Strategy**: Invest in local mineral processing in Africa to ensure value addition and secure refined supplies.
- **Regular Summits**: Revive the India–Africa Forum **Summit, ideally every three years, to sustain engagement.**
- **Triangular Cooperation**: Partner with **Japan, UAE, and others to jointly** fund African projects and offset resource constraints.

Conclusion

India–Africa ties rest on trust, **capacity-building, and South–South cooperation. As S. Jaishankar noted, the partnership goes beyond strategy and economics**, rooted in shared bonds and solidarity.

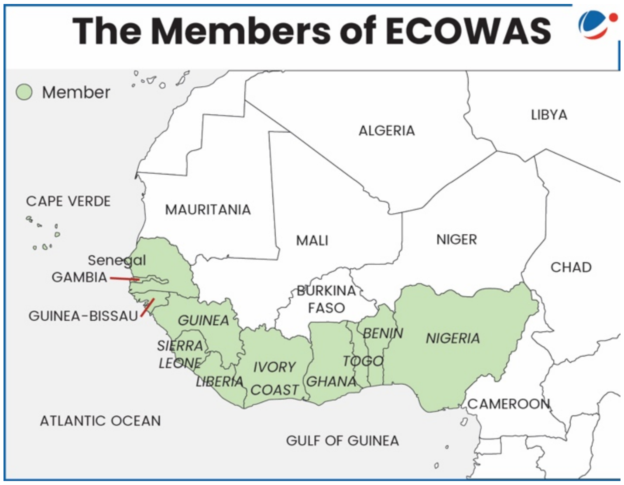
4.5.1. ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)

Why in the News?

ECOWAS marked its 50th anniversary this year.

About ECOWAS

- **Established**: Established on **28 May 1975** by **15 West African countries** through the **Treaty of Lagos**.
- **Regional Bloc**: ECOWAS comprises **12 West African countries** (June 2025).
- **Aim**: To promote cooperation and integration for an **economic union in West Africa**.
- ECOWAS established its **free trade area in 1990** and adopted a **common external tariff in January 2015**.


The Members of ECOWAS

India–ECOWAS Relations

- **Diplomatic Relations**: India became an **Observer** to ECOWAS in **2004**. ECOWAS supports India's bid for **permanent UN Security Council** membership.
- **South–South Cooperation**: India supports regional development of western Africa through **MoU between ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency and India's International Solar Alliance (ISA)**.
- **Economic Cooperation**: In **2006**, India gave the grouping a **line of credit (LoC) worth USD 250 million** to supplement **Focus Africa Programme** launched from **2002-03**.

Conclusion

As ECOWAS enters its **sixth decade**, it faces a **historic crossroads** where **internal fragmentation, political instability, and citizen disconnect** threaten its future despite its commendable legacy of **integration, peacekeeping, and human development**.

4.6. INDIA-ASEAN RELATIONS

Why in the News?

22nd ASEAN-India Summit held in Malaysia.

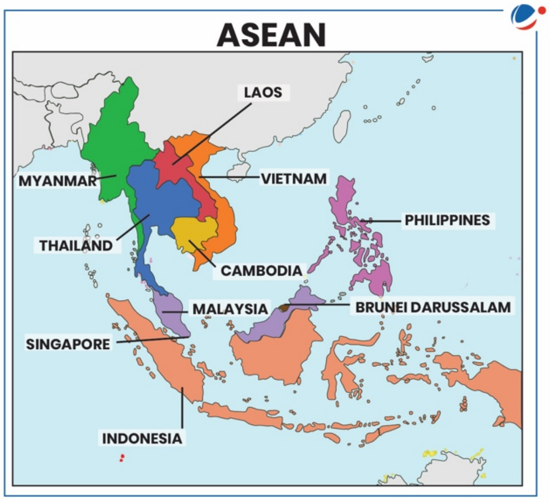
Key Highlights of the Summit

- Support for **ASEAN-India Plan of Action** to implement **ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2026-2030).**
- Adoption of the **ASEAN-India Joint Leaders' Statement on Sustainable Tourism.**

- Designating **2026** as **"ASEAN-India Year of Maritime Cooperation".**
- Proposed establishment of a **Centre for Southeast Asian Studies** at **Nalanda University.**
- Holding **East Asia Summit Maritime Heritage Festiva**l at Lothal, Gujarat.

Significance of ASEAN for India

- The two had elevated their ties from Strategic Partnership to **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP)** in 2022.
- **India's support to ASEAN Centrality:** It places ASEAN countries at the **forefront** of the vision of **India's Indo-Pacific strategy** and **Act East Policy.**
- **Trade: ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITGA)** is a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signed in 2009 to boost trade ties.
  - **Bilateral trade** between the two stands around **123 Billion USD (2024-25).**
- **Counterbalancing China: ASEAN-India Joint Statement on Maritime Cooperation (2023)** echoes upholding of international law in the South China Sea.
- **Development of India's North East:** ASEAN countries lie closest to **India's Northeastern states** with connectivity projects like **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project** passing through the region.
- **Multilateralism:** ASEAN framework highlights the **importance of multilateralism**, an essential focus of Indian foreign policy.



Challenges in India-ASEAN Relations

- **Economic and Trade Imbalances:**
  - **Widening Deficit & FTA Issues**: exacerbated by an **asymmetric Free Trade Agreement** (AIFTA), **weak rules of origin allow third-party (largely Chinese) goods to enter India at preferential rates** through ASEAN.
  - **RCEP Withdrawal**: India's 2019 exit from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) created friction, limiting deeper economic integration.
- **Geopolitical and Strategic Friction on China**: Deep economic ties between ASEAN nations and China make many members hesitant to confront Beijing, limiting the strategic scope of India-ASEAN security pacts.
- **Connectivity Delays:** Key projects, such as the **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway**, face significant, multi-year delays due to political instability and logistical challenges in Myanmar.

Way ahead to strengthen the relationship

- **Comprehensive implementation of the 2024 '10-Point plan'** for India-Asean Relations, announced by Indian PM.
- Update and expand **ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA).**
- Initiate an **'Indo-Pacific Maritime partnership'** to counterbalance China.
- Ensure **Code of Conduct (CoC)** for Navigation for maritime **engagement in South China Sea.**
- **Complete key connectivity projects** (**e.g.,** India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway) at earliest.

Conclusion

Prime Minister Modi expressed India's unwavering commitment to **ASEAN Unity, ASEAN Centrality, and the ASEAN Outlook** on the Indo-Pacific. Calling the **21st century the "Asian Century,"** he underscored that robust India–ASEAN ties would be instrumental in shaping Asia's future while advancing regional peace, stability, and prosperity.

4.7. INDIA-LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES RELATIONS

Why in the News?

The Prime Minister recently visited **Trinidad and Tobago, Argentina, Brazil, and attended the 17th BRICS Summit in Rio.**

Latin America
MEXICO
CUBA
REP. DOMINICANA
HAITI
PUERTO RICO
HONDURAS
GUATEMALA
SALVADOR
NICARAGUA
COSTA RICA
PANAMA
VENEZUELA
GUYANA
SURINAME
COLOMBIA
ECUADOR
BRAZIL
PERU
BOLIVIA
CHILE
URUGUAY
ARGENTINA

More on the News

- Received **Order of the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago.**
- Announced extension of **OCI cards to sixth-generation diaspora** in Trinidad & Tobago.

Significance of Latin America and Caribbean (LAC)-India Relations

- **Strategic:**
  - **Defence Cooperation**: India and Brazil enhanced ties via Joint **Defence Committee and 2+2 dialogue.**
  - **Critical Minerals: KABIL agreed with CAMYEN** for lithium blocks in Argentina; Lithium Triangle holds 75% global reserves.
  - **Food Security:** Latin America supplies **edible oils and pulses**; Argentina is a key soybean oil source.
- **Economic & Trade Relations:**
  - **Trade and Investments:**
    - Trade reached **USD 35.73 billion in 2023-24; Indian firms invested USD 12 billion** in IT, **pharma, energy, mining, manufacturing, and agro-chemicals.**
    - India has a Preferential **Trade Agreement with MERCOSUR.**
  - **Energy Security:**
    - Crude oil from **Venezuela, Mexico, and Brazil makes up 30% of India's regional imports.**
    - India extended US$140 million **Line of Credit to CARICOM** for solar and climate projects.
- **Cooperation at Regional and Multilateral Fora:**
  - Collaborates in **G20, BRICS, IBSA, G4** with Argentina and Brazil.
  - Engages with **Community of Latin American and Caribbean States** (**CELAC), CARICOM, and Central American Integration System (SICA).**

Challenges

- China has **strong Latin America ties**; trade grew 35 times since 2000.
- MERCOSUR faces **internal splits**; Brazil and Uruguay seek bilateral deals, Argentina may exit.
- High transport costs **due to distance limit engagement**.
- Latin America is a **low priority** in India's foreign policy.
- Language barriers and **weak diaspora presence.**

Way Forward

- **Prioritize political dialogues**, make Latin America a foreign policy focus.
- Strengthen economic ties via tariff cuts, **regulations, and free trade deals.**
- Improve connectivity with **direct shipping, air links**, and freight corridors.
- Expand tech collaboration in **renewables, agriculture, IT, and climate resilience.**
- Mobilize private sector **through trade missions and incentives.**

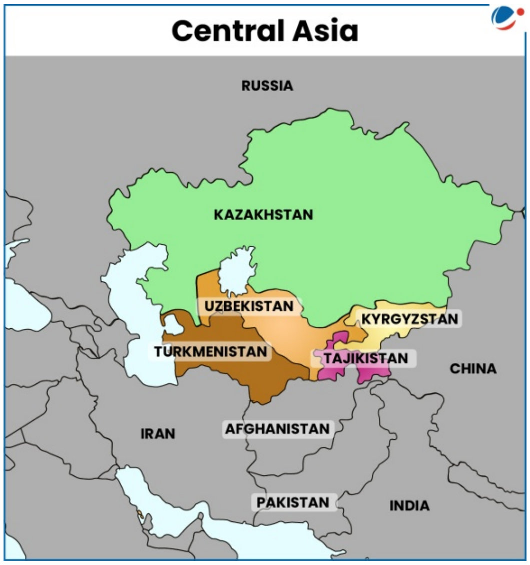
Conclusion

As India seeks to expand its global footprint, deeper engagement with Latin America aligns with its vision of **South-South Cooperation,** transforming the relationship into a pillar of mutual growth, resource security, and global governance reform.

4.8. INDIA-CENTRAL ASIA RELATIONS

Why in the News?

Ministers of Foreign Affairs of **Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan** participated in 4th India-central asia dialogue in New Delhi.



Key Highlights of Joint Statement of 4th Dialogue:

- Central Asian nations **condemned the Pahalgam terror attack** and also expressed interest in **joint exploration of rare earth & critical minerals.**
- Ministers welcomed the **designation of 2025 as the "International Year of Peace and Trust"** in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution.
- Ministers commended First High-Level International Conference on Glaciers' Preservation, held in Tajikistan as part of observing **International year of Glaciers' Preservation (2025).**

India -Central Asia Relations:

- **Age Old Ties:** India's linkages with Central Asia date back millennia t**o at least the third century BCE**.The two were connected through the **silk road.**
    - In current times, Central Asian Republics constitute the **extended neighborhood of India.**
- **Connectivity & Infrastructure Development:** Through initiatives like the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), Chabahar port** etc.
- **Energy Security:** E.g. **TAPI (Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India) pipeline** is a natural gas project designed to transport gas from **Turkmenistan's Galkynysh field to India.**
    - India has been importing **yellow cake (Uranium oxide) for its nuclear plants** from Kazakhstan since 2009.
- **Trade & Economic Cooperation:** E.g. India and Kyrgyzstan's **Bilateral Investment Treaty**, establishing **India-Central Asia Business Council** etc.
- **Security and Defense:** Through annual military exercises e.g. **Khanjar (Between India and Kyrgyzstan), "Kazind" (Between India and Kazakhstan).**

Conclusion

Though **limited by geography**, India-Central Asia ties have evolved into a strategically important, multi-dimensional partnership driven by shared **security concerns, historical-cultural bonds, and growing connectivity efforts**.

4.9. INDIA-JAPAN RELATIONS

Why in the News?

Indian PM visited Japan and **signed key agreements to strengthen India-Japan partnership.**

Key Outcomes of the Prime Minister's Visit

- **India-Japan Joint Vision for the Next Decade**: 10-year strategy for cooperation in **8 areas including Economic Partnership, Economic Security, Mobility, Ecological Sustainability, and State-Prefecture Engagements.**
    - **State-Prefecture partnerships**: Andhra Pradesh–Toyama, Tamil Nadu–Ehime, Uttar Pradesh–Yamanashi, Gujarat–Shizuoka.
- **Economic Security Initiative:** Strengthen **supply chains in semiconductors, clean energy,** telecom, and emerging technologies.

- **Space Cooperation:** Joint Lunar Polar **Exploration Mission (Chandrayaan 5).**
- **Other Outcomes:** Joint Declaration on **Security Cooperation;** India-Japan **AI Initiative; Sustainable Fuel** Initiative.

Pillars of India-Japan Relations

- **Status**: Special Strategic & Global Partnership since 2014.
- **Economic Cooperation**: India-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement 2011 covers trade, investment, IPR, and mobility; bilateral **trade FY 2023-24 US$ 22.85B etc.**
- **Security Cooperation:** Agreements include 2025 Joint Declaration, 2015 defense pacts; **2+2 Ministerial Dialogues; bilateral exercises JIMEX, Dharma Guardian; multilateral MILAN, MALABAR.**
- **Development Cooperation:** Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail; **India-Japan Act East Forum supports Northeast development under Act East Policy and Japan's Free & Open Indo-Pacific vision.**
- **Maritime Cooperation: Recently,** India and Japan agreed to deepen maritime relations for a sustainable, mutually beneficial future in following areas
    - **Smart Islands**: **Andaman Nicobar Islands** and **Lakswadeep islands** to be converted into **'Smart Islands'** through **sustainable technologies** (renewable energy, smart mobility), **disaster-resilient infrastructure, digital connectivity,** etc.
    - **Shipbuilding**, co-development of **ports** and **maritime industrial clusters.**

Japan

MONGOLIA
CHINA
NORTH KOREA
SOUTH KOREA
SEA OF JAPAN (EAST SEA)
JAPAN
TOKYO
TAIWAN
PACIFIC OCEAN
PHILIPPINES

Role of India-Japan in Global and Regional Order

- **Rules-Based Global Order:** Commitment to **free and open Indo-Pacific; coordinate via QUAD** on maritime security, critical tech, and resilient supply chains.
- **Strengthening Multilateralism:** Cooperate in **G4 for UNSC reforms** and support **permanent seat candidacies.**
- **African Development:** Trilateral cooperation in Africa via **Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC, 2017)** and Japan-India Initiative for Sustainable Economic Development.
- **Supply Chain Resilience:** Collaboration with Australia in the **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative** to reduce **over-reliance on single sources.**

Conclusion

Despite nuclear tech restrictions, **India–Japan partnership is a key Indo-Pacific pillar. Japan counters China via US alliances; India maintains strategic autonomy**. Shared democratic values **drive multilateralism, economic resilience, and inclusive growth.**

4.10. INDIA-CANADA RELATIONS

Why in the News?

Canadian Prime Minister visited India to strengthen bilateral relations and enhance cooperation in key areas.

Key outcomes of the visit

- Signed the **Terms of Reference for Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) Negotiations:** Target $50 billion trade (2030).

RUSSIA
ARCTIC OCEAN
GREENLAND (DEN.)
UNITED STATES
LABRADOR SEA
HUDSON BAY
CANADA
PACIFIC OCEAN
OTTAWA
UNITED STATES
ATLANTIC OCEAN

- **Nuclear Energy:** $2.6 billion agreement for uranium ore supply (2027–35) to fuel Indian reactors.
- **Multilateral:** Canada to join **Global Biofuels Alliance** & **International Solar Alliance**.
- **Others: MoUs on critical mineral**, **renewable energy**, etc.

Significance of Uranium Deal

- **Ensures energy security** for 100 GW nuclear target by 2047.
- **Reduces ~70% import dependence;** Canadian high-grade ore (10-100x richer) is cheaper than low-grade Indian ore (0.02-0.45%).
- **Diversifies supply** beyond Kazakhstan, Russia, Uzbekistan.
- Operates under **2010 Civil Nuclear Agreement**, IAEA safeguards, and peaceful use provisions.

Significance of Relation

- Expanding **bilateral trade around USD 8.66 billion** (2024-2025); **Strategic Partnership** since 2018.
- Cooperation in **uranium, LNG, and critical minerals** supporting **India's energy security**
- 1.8 million Indo-Canadians; 4 lakh Indian students' **diaspora**; Pulses & potash for **food security.**

Issues in the Relation

- **Khalistan extremism** and Nijjar killing (2023) causing diplomatic crisis.
- **Interference in internal matters**.
- Visa restrictions affecting students.

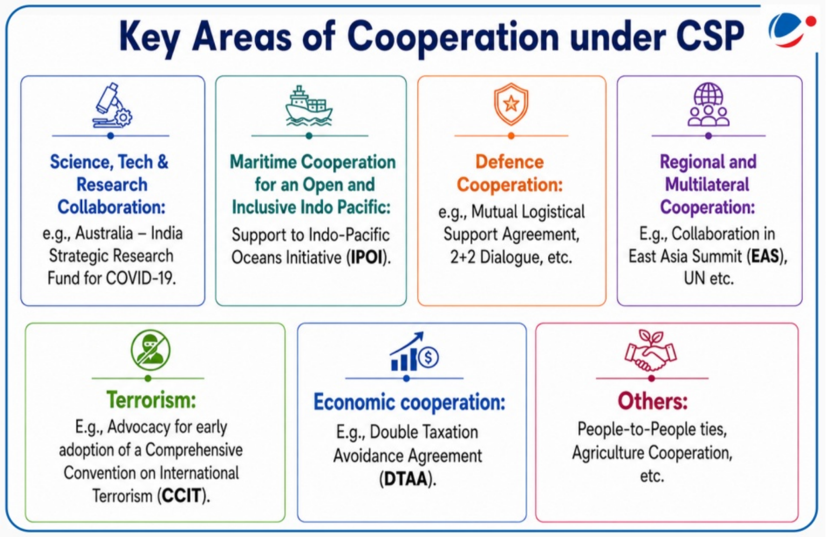
Conclusion

India and Canada can pursue a calibrated and pragmatic approach by addressing security concerns and respecting mutual sensitivities. Strengthening cooperation in trade, energy, and technology, along with leveraging diaspora linkages, can facilitate trust-building and enhance the overall bilateral partnership.

4.11. INDIA-AUSTRALIA RELATIONS

Why in the News?

Marking 5th **anniversary of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** (CSP), both the countries emphasized on the **shared vision for a stable, secure, and prosperous Indo-Pacific continues** to guide collaboration.



Key Areas of Cooperation under CSP

Science, Tech & Research Collaboration: e.g., Australia – India Strategic Research Fund for COVID-19.

Maritime Cooperation for an Open and Inclusive Indo Pacific: Support to Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (**IPOI**).

Defence Cooperation: e.g., Mutual Logistical Support Agreement, 2+2 Dialogue, etc.

Regional and Multilateral Cooperation: E.g., Collaboration in East Asia Summit (**EAS**), UN etc.

Terrorism: E.g., Advocacy for early adoption of a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (**CCIT**).

Economic cooperation: E.g., Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (**DTAA**).

Others: People-to-People ties, Agriculture Cooperation, etc.

More on the News

- Both the countries also welcomed signing of **Australia-India Joint Research Project** and **agreed to work together to combat terrorism** in all its forms.
- Also, **India–Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA)** completed 4 years**.**

About India - Australia CSP

- **In 2020**, the two nations decided to upgrade bilateral relationship from **'Strategic Partnership'** to **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP).**

How India-Australia CSP help in India's foreign policy objectives?

- **Free and open Indo-Pacific**: India and Australia are part of the **QUAD** (with the US & Japan), collaborating on maritime security and regional stability; participation in **military exercises** like **AUSINDEX** and **Malabar** can enhance interoperability and naval cooperation, etc.
- **Diversification of Strategic and Economic Partnerships**: Trade diversification through **Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA), Supply Chain Resilience Initiative** (with Japan), etc.
- **Multilateral and regional engagement**: Joint participation in platforms like **East Asia Summit**, **Indian Ocean Rim Association,** etc.

About India–Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA)

- Signed in 2022, Agreement played a pivotal role in enhancing trade flows, fostering industry linkages, and creating new opportunities for businesses, entrepreneurs, and employment.
- **Key Benefits accrued from the ECTA**
  - **India's Exports to Australia Doubled:** From USD 4 billion in FY 2020–21 to **USD 8.5 billion in FY 2024–25.**
    - In FY 2025–26 (up to February), India's **total trade with Australia stood at USD 19.3 billion.**
  - **Preferential Market Access:** India granted preferential market access on 70.3% of its tariff lines while Australia granted the same **on 100% of its tariff lines**, corresponding to 100% of imports from India.
  - From 1 January 2026, all Indian exports are **eligible for zero-duty market access into Australia.**
  - **Broad Based Sectoral Gains:** Notable growth witnessed in exports across textiles, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and agricultural products.
  - **Signing of Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) in organic sector:** Strengthening Organic Trade.

Significance of Australia for India

- **Strategic Alignment towards Indo-Pacific:** Both share commitment to **transparent, open, secure, inclusive, and rules based** order in Indo-Pacific, as seen in:
  - Australia is a key partner in **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)**, alongside **United States and Japan.**
  - **Australia-India Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative Partnership (AIIPOIP)**.
  - **2+2 dialogue framework between defence and foreign ministers** launched in 2019.
- **Defence Engagement:** Regular joint naval exercise (AUSINDEX); signed **Mutual Logistics Support Agreement in 2021** for closer defence cooperation.
- **Energy and Resources:** Development of New supply chains under **India-Australia Critical Minerals Investment Partnership**; cooperation in Renewable Energy including Green Hydrogen**,** etc.

Conclusion

India–Australia ties are emerging as a **cornerstone of India's Indo-Pacific strategy**, where strategic cooperation, economic integration, critical minerals partnership, and **even cricket diplomacy** collectively strengthen a secure, prosperous, and people-centric regional order.

4.12. INDIA-NEW ZEALAND RELATIONS

Why in the News?

India and New Zealand signed a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in April 2026.

Key Features of India-New Zealand FTA

- **Trade Target:** India and New Zealand aim to **double their bilateral trade to $5 billion USD** (from ~2.5 billion USD in 2024-25) within five years.
- **100% Duty-Free Access:** New Zealand eliminated duties on **all Indian exports**, providing a major boost to **labour-intensive sectors** like MSMEs, textiles, leather, footwear, and gems etc.
- **FDI Commitment:** New Zealand committed to a **USD 20 billion investment** in India over the next 15 years.

- **Protection of Sensitive Sectors: India has offered market access** in 70% of the tariff lines, covering 95% of New Zealand's Bilateral Trade.
    - ~30% of tariff lines are in the **exclusion category**, **to shield farmers and domestic industries.** E.g. dairy, sugar, vegetable products like onions, aluminium etc.
- **Rules of Origin:** A robust framework of **Product Specific Rules of Origin (PSRs)** established to effectively prevent misuse of trade benefits.
- **Talent & Mobility: Student Mobility and Post Study Work Visa** for STEM Graduates, Skilled Professionals; an annual quota of 5,000 **Temporary Employment Visas** for skilled Indians.
- **Globalizing AYUSH: First-time** provision by New Zealand to recognize and facilitate trade in India's **traditional medicine** systems, including Ayurveda and Yoga.
- **Others: Agricultural Productivity Partnership;** Market Access across 118 **services** sectors, with Most-Favoured Nation (**MFN**) treatment in 139 sectors.

India-New Zealand Relations

- **Market:** New Zealand is India's **second-largest trading partner in the Oceania** region.
- **Trade Volume:** Bilateral merchandise trade **grew by 49%** to reach **USD 1.3 billion** in 2024–25.
- **Positive Trade Balance:** India exports more to New Zealand than it imports.
- **Diaspora: ~300,000-strong Indian diaspora** (~5% of New Zealand's population) acting as a cultural and economic bridge.

Conclusion

The India–New Zealand FTA marks a new chapter in bilateral ties, combining trade expansion, investment flows, talent mobility, diaspora linkages, and cultural diplomacy to build a future-oriented and mutually beneficial partnership.

4.13. INDIA-SOUTH KOREA RELATIONS

Why in the News?

South Korean President visited India marking a milestone Special Strategic Partnership. It resulted in **Joint Strategic Vision (2026-2030)** along with other agreements.

Key outcomes of the visit

- **Strengthening Foundation:** Annual leader-level meeting institutionalised for continuous guidance to the partnership.
- **Indo-Pacific Alignment:** S. Korea joined **Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative,** a non-treaty-based voluntary arrangement launched by India.
- **Economic cooperation:** Bilateral Trade to be doubled to $54 billion by 2030.
    - **Economic Security Dialogue**: Launched for supply chain resilience and technological cooperation.
- **Climate cooperation:** S. Korea joined International Solar Alliance, while India joined the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI).
- **People-to-People Ties:** 2028-29 designated as Year of India-ROK Friendship.
    - **Mumbai Korea Centre** to be launched to foster K-pop–Bollywood cultural collaboration.
- **Maritime and shipbuilding:** Comprehensive Partnership in Shipbuilding, Shipping and Maritime Logistics with shared **Vision for Operation of Yard Assisted Growth with Efficiency and Scale (VOYAGES).**
- **Technological cooperation: India-Korea Digital Bridge** launched for cooperation in AI, semiconductors, and IT sectors.

About India- S. Korea Relations

- **India-ROK Special Strategic Partnership** was established in 2015.
- **Bilateral Trade:** $27 billion with India facing trade deficit of $15.19 billion.

- **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement 2010**: India seeks its upgrade to address trade deficit and ensure a more balanced partnership.
- **Defence: 2020 Roadmap** to Defence Industry Cooperation, **K9-Vajra** howitzers being built in India via technology transfer by South Korean firm, **KIND-X** (Korea-India Defence Accelerator), to connect startups and investors.

Conclusion

From **semiconductors and shipbuilding to AI and cultural collaboration**, the India–South Korea partnership reflects the growing **convergence of two innovation-driven democracies** committed to shaping the economic and strategic architecture of the Indo-Pacific.

4.14. INDIA-MONGOLIA RELATIONS

The two countries celebrated the **10th anniversary of their Strategic Partnership**.

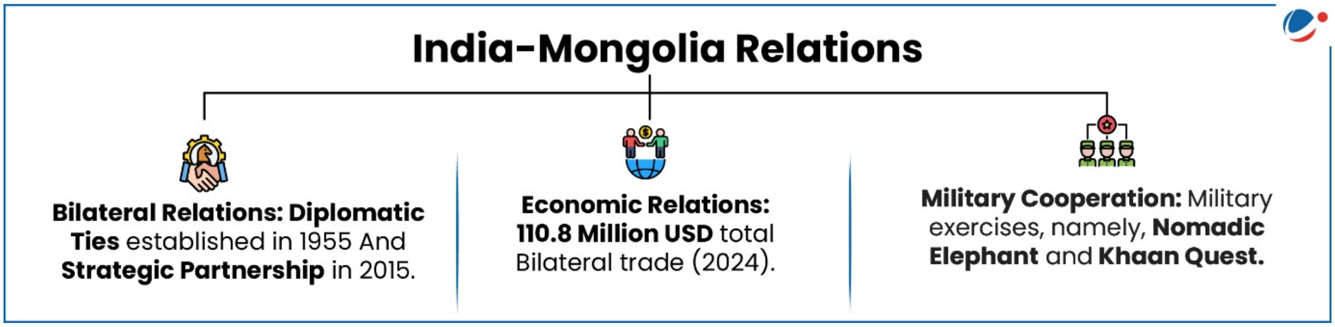
Key MOUs signed

- **Development:** Commitment to **Mongol Oil Refinery Project ($1.7B Line of Credit from India).**
- **Cultural:** MoU between Ladakh Council and **Mongolia's Arkhangai Province.**
- **Spiritual**: India to send Buddha relics, **digitize 1M Buddhist manuscripts**, link Nalanda and Gandan Monastery.
- **Others:** Free e-visas, **trade via third-country ports**, cooperation in uranium, supply chains, and critical minerals**.**

Mongolia
RUSSIA
ULAANBAATAR
MONGOLIA
CHINA
JAPAN

Significance of Mongolia for India:

- **Strategic:** Key for geopolitical balance and **regional stability.**
- **International Cooperation:** Support free, open, **rule-based Indo-Pacific and multilateral engagement**.
- **Energy & Economy**: Rich **coking coal reserves** aid steel industry.



India-Mongolia Relations

Bilateral Relations: Diplomatic Ties established in 1955 And **Strategic Partnership** in 2015.

Economic Relations: 110.8 Million USD total Bilateral trade (2024).

Military Cooperation: Military exercises, namely, **Nomadic Elephant** and **Khaan Quest.**

4.15. KEYWORDS

Extended Neighbourhood	Triangular Cooperation	Asian Premium	Mineral-to-Market Strategy
Co-development and Co-production	Kampala Principles	South-South Cooperation	Soft Power & Development Diplomacy

4.16. PRACTICE QUESTION

"While the India-Russia Strategic Partnership has been time-tested, the evolving geopolitical dynamics and domestic economic realities present unprecedented challenges." Examine.			
Introduction	Body Part-1	Body Part-2	Conclusion
Briefly highlight the historical depth and strategic significance of India–Russia relations in the changing global order.	Discuss the factors that demonstrate the resilience and enduring strengths of the India–Russia Strategic Partnership.	Examine the emerging geopolitical, economic, and strategic challenges that are testing and reshaping the partnership.	Suggest the need for adaptation, diversification, and mutual accommodation to sustain the partnership in a multipolar world.

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5. IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, AGENCIES, AND FORA, THEIR STRUCTURE, MANDATE

5.1. INTERNATIONAL LAW

Why in the News?

United Nations Secretary-General declared that **rule of law** is a cornerstone of global peace and security.

Erosion of International Law in Recent Years

- **Violation of the UN Charter's Prohibition on the Use of Force**: E.g. Russia's invasion of Ukraine (2022), U.S.-Israeli war on Iran (2026).
- **Disregard for UNCLOS (International Maritime Law):** E.g. China's refusal to accept the Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling on the South China Sea; maritime blockade of Strait of Hormuz by US and Iran.
- **Violations of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law**: E.g. Indiscriminate civilian casualties in Gaza and China's treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang.
- **Weakening of Arms-Control Regimes:** E.g. the termination of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty between the US and Russia, acceleration of Iran's nuclear program, etc.
- **Failure to Enforce Environmental Commitments**: E.g. Illegal deforestation in the Amazon despite global climate commitments.
- **Weak Institutions**: E.g. **UN Security Council** deadlocks and the **International Criminal Court's** inability to prosecute major powers.
- **"à la carte menu" approach**: **Selective adherence to international law** by States, setting precedents that potentially encourage **impunity** and **erode trust** among nations.

Priorities for Action in upholding international law

- **Upholding UN Charter: Countries should honour** the commitments under the UN Charter including safeguarding human rights and respecting the **sovereign equality of States**.
- **Peaceful Dispute Settlement:** Use tools of **negotiation, mediation and judicial settlement**, alongside stronger partnerships with regional organizations.
- **Greater reliance on independent courts and tribunals**: Including the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)** and stronger support for international criminal justice.

About International Law

- **It defines** the **legal responsibilities** of States in their conduct with each other, and their treatment of individuals within State boundaries.
    - The term 'International law' was first coined by **Jeramy Bentham**.
- It also **regulates the global commons,** such as the environment and sustainable development, international waters, outer space, global communications and world trade.
- **Significance of International law:**
    - **For smaller and less-powerful countries:** Promises equal treatment, sovereignty, dignity, and justice.
    - **For powerful countries: Acts as 'guardrails,'** defining what is acceptable especially in times of disagreement, division and conflict.

Main UN bodies upholding international law

- **UN Security Council: Only** body with Charter-mandated authority to adopt **decisions binding on all Member States** and to **authorize the use of force** under international law.

- **ICJ:** It settles legal disputes submitted to it by States parties in accordance with international law.
- **UN General Assembly:** Make recommendations to promote the development and codification of international law. The **Sixth Committee** is the primary forum for the consideration of **legal questions in the General Assembly.**

Conclusion

As geopolitical power increasingly outpaces legal restraint, **the credibility of international law** will depend not on the strength of its principles, but on the **willingness of states to apply them consistently** rather than selectively.

5.2. UNITED NATIONS (UN) BODIES

5.2.1. UN REFORMS

Why in the News?

The UN unveiled the **UN80 Initiative Action Plan**, outlining coordinated, system-wide reforms.

About UN80 Initiative

- Launched **March 2025 to mark the UN's 80th anniversary.**
- **Aim:** Make the UN agile, integrated, efficient, and impactful despite shrinking resources.
- **Three work streams**: **improve efficiency, review mandates, consider structural** and program changes.
- **Timeline**: Nov 2025 – Dec 2026.
- **Key Reform Areas (Work Packages)**
    - **Peace & Security**: updated peace operation models.
    - **Humanitarian Response**: "**New Humanitarian Compact**" for simpler plans & integrated supply chains.
    - **Development System**: reconfigure UN **country teams & regional setups.**
    - **Institutional Mergers**: possible mergers **with overlapping roles (e.g., UNDP–UNOPS).**
    - **Operational Enablers**: shared data, tech platforms, unified supply chains, simpler training systems.

Key Achievements of United Nations in new world order

- **Peace and Security:** Over **68,000 peacekeepers** were deployed across 11 peacekeeping missions. E.g. South Sudan, Congo, etc.
- **Conflict Prevention:** The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) conducted **170 mediation support assignment.** E.g. Iran–Iraq 1988.
- **Promoting democracy:** UN has helped register **377 million voters** and assisted some 50 countries with their elections.
- **Human Rights:** Under Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948); UNHRC is Investigating human right violations in Myanmar, Afghanistan, etc.
- **Development & Poverty Reduction: Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs, 2000–2015) and **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs, 2015–2030).
- **Climate & Environment:** Major achievements such as **UNFCCC** (1992), **Kyoto Protocol** (1997), **Paris Agreement** (2015) which promote Global climate governance holding countries accountable.
- **Global Health:** 3 million lives per year were saved through vaccines supplied to 45% of the world's children.
- **Essential Services:** UNDP helped **160 million people** gain access to essential services for health, education, and water. (via UNICEF and other UN bodies).
- **'Pact for Future', 2024:** Includes strong attention to human rights, gender and sustainable development and **Global Digital Compact (1st comprehensive global framework for digital cooperation).**

Need for UN reforms

- **Structural:**
    - UNSC's composition is outdated and **unrepresentative (e.g., no India as a permanent member**).
    - Credibility erosion due to veto-driven **deadlocks and unequal application of norms (Ukraine, Israel–Palestine).**
- **Governance:**
    - **New issues (cybersecurity, AI ethics)** lack tailored UN mechanisms and resources.
    - Over 40,000 mandates cause **duplication and inefficiency.**

- **Institutional:**
    - **Shrinking finances** (projected fall from ~$66B to ~$50B by 2026), heavy reliance on voluntary funding.
    - **Outdated digital systems** and manual processes.
    - **Fragmented agencies with overlapping roles** (e.g., UN-Women and UNFPA).
    - **Expanding mandates outpace resources**, creating ambition–capacity gaps.

Way forward

- **UNSC reforms:**
    - G4 nations (India, Germany, Japan, Brazil) demand permanent seats.
    - Reforms needed in veto usage, e.g., restricting veto in cases of genocide, war crimes, and mass atrocities etc.
- **Funding mechanism:** Strengthen incentives for pooled and core funding along with mandatory funding obligations from all the members as per capacity based on GDP.
- **Addressing New Global Challenges:** Create specialized bodies for climate governance, AI ethics, cyber security, pandemics and strengthen organizations like WHO for autonomy & resources for global health emergencies.
- **Use of technology:** Shift toward pooled core ICT services and launch a new **Technology Accelerator Platform (TAP)** along with **UN System Data Commons**, a shared digital backbone.
- **Structural changes:** Such as conducting thorough assessments of potential **mergers between UNDP and UNOPS**, and between **UNFPA and UN Women etc.**

Conclusion

For a world facing climate shocks, technological disruptions, and geopolitical fragmentation, a reformed and revitalized United Nations is not a choice but a strategic necessity.

5.2.2. UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Why in the News?

India was elected unopposed to UN Human Rights Council for the seventh time.

- India is elected for a three-year term (2026–28).

About UN Human Rights Council

- **Overview: It is an intergovernmental body within the United Nations system** that **promotes and protects human rights** globally.
- **Genesis: Established in 2006** by the General Assembly by replacing the **Commission on Human Rights.**
- **Membership:** It has **47 members** elected annually by the UN General Assembly, **serving three-year terms with a maximum of two consecutive terms.**
- **Function:** Provides a global forum on human rights, adopts resolutions, reviews member states, and mandates investigations and special procedures.

Criticisms & Challenges

- **Politicisation & Selectivity**: Continues despite reforms (e.g., disproportionate focus on Israel; silence on major powers).
- **Membership of violators**: Countries with poor records get elected (no strict criteria for "highest standards"). E.g. **Pakistan**.
- **Bloc voting**: E.g. OIC influence leads to bias.
- **Ineffectiveness**: Recommendations are non-binding; weak enforcement.
- **Resource constraints** and **overlap** with other UN bodies.
- US withdrew in 2018 (rejoined later); criticisms from Western and developing countries alike.

Way Forward

- **Strict membership** criteria, **depoliticisation**, follow-up on **Universal Periodic Review recommendations**, more balanced agenda.
- **Strengthen linkages with UNSC** (for enforcement in grave cases) and treaty bodies.
- Greater role for **civil society** and **National Human Rights Institutions** (NHRIs).

Conclusion

As debates over human rights become increasingly entangled with geopolitics, India has an opportunity to promote a rights-based order that is both principled and free from selective application.

5.2.3. UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC)

Why in the News?

India has been elected to the **UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** for the term **2026–2028**.

More on the News

- **Membership** in ECOSOC is region-based and divided among five geographic groups Africa, Asia-Pacific, Eastern European, Latin American & Caribbean, and Western European and other States.
- India is elected under the **Asia-Pacific group**, alongside **China, Lebanon, and Turkmenistan** (4 seats available)

About UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

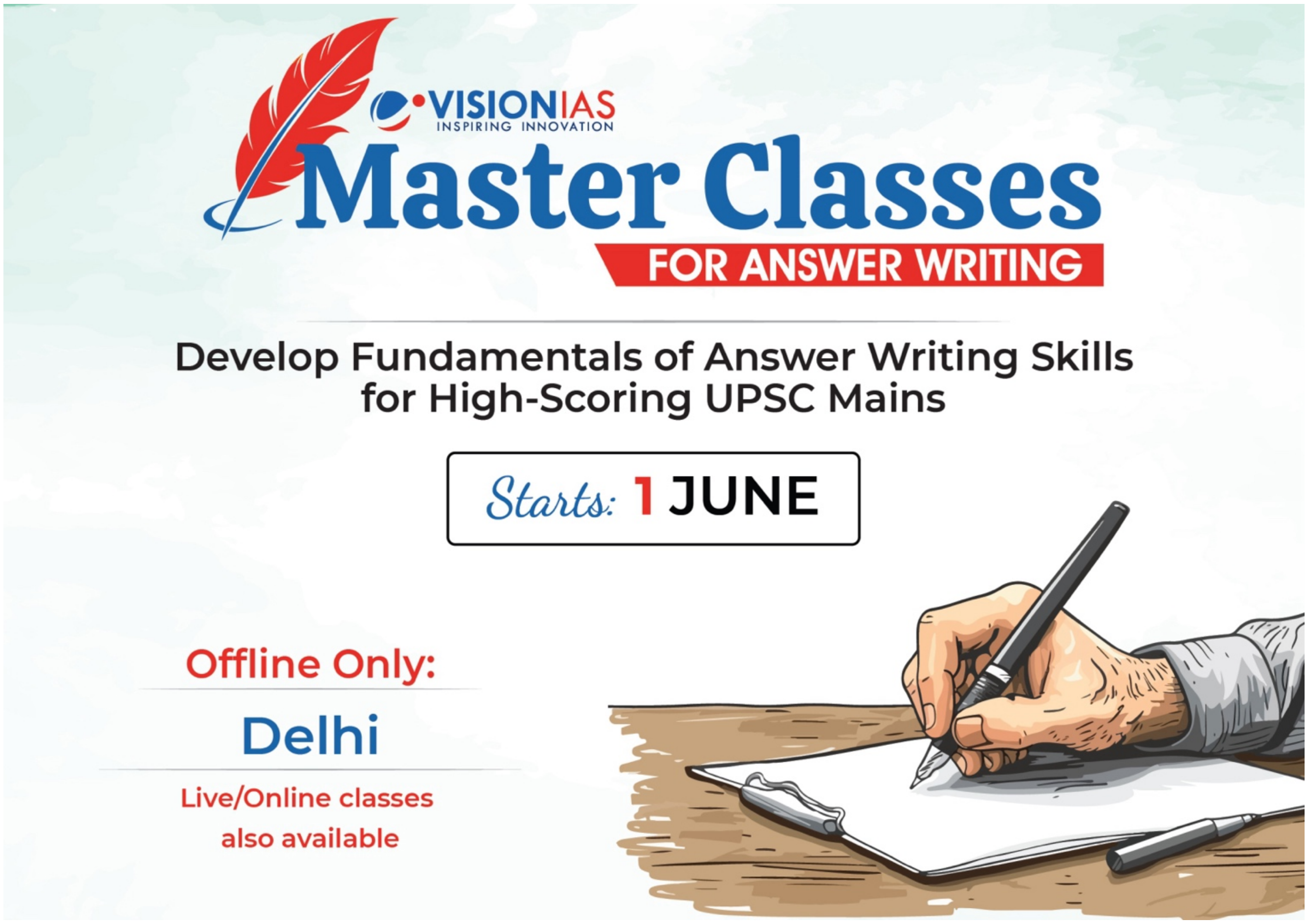
- **Genesis:** Established in 1945 as one of the six main organs of the United Nations.
- **Members:** 54 (elected by the UN General Assembly for a 3-year term; 18 elected each year)

Key Role of ECOSOC

- **Advance the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.**
- **Coordinates** work of **UN bodies and specialized agencies.**
- Issues **policy recommendations** to the UN system and member states.

Functional Commissions of ECOSOC	Main Area of Work
Commission on Social Development	Social welfare, poverty reduction, social inclusion, ageing, youth and disability issues
Commission on the Status of Women	Gender equality, women's empowerment, protection of women's rights
Commission on Population and Development	Population trends, demographic changes, migration and development
Statistical Commission	Development of international statistical standards and methodologies

Commission on Narcotic Drugs	International drug control policies and combating illicit drug trafficking
Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice	Crime prevention, criminal justice reforms, transnational organized crime
Commission on Science and Technology for Development	Use of science, technology and innovation for sustainable development
United Nations Forum on Forests	Sustainable forest management and conservation of forest resources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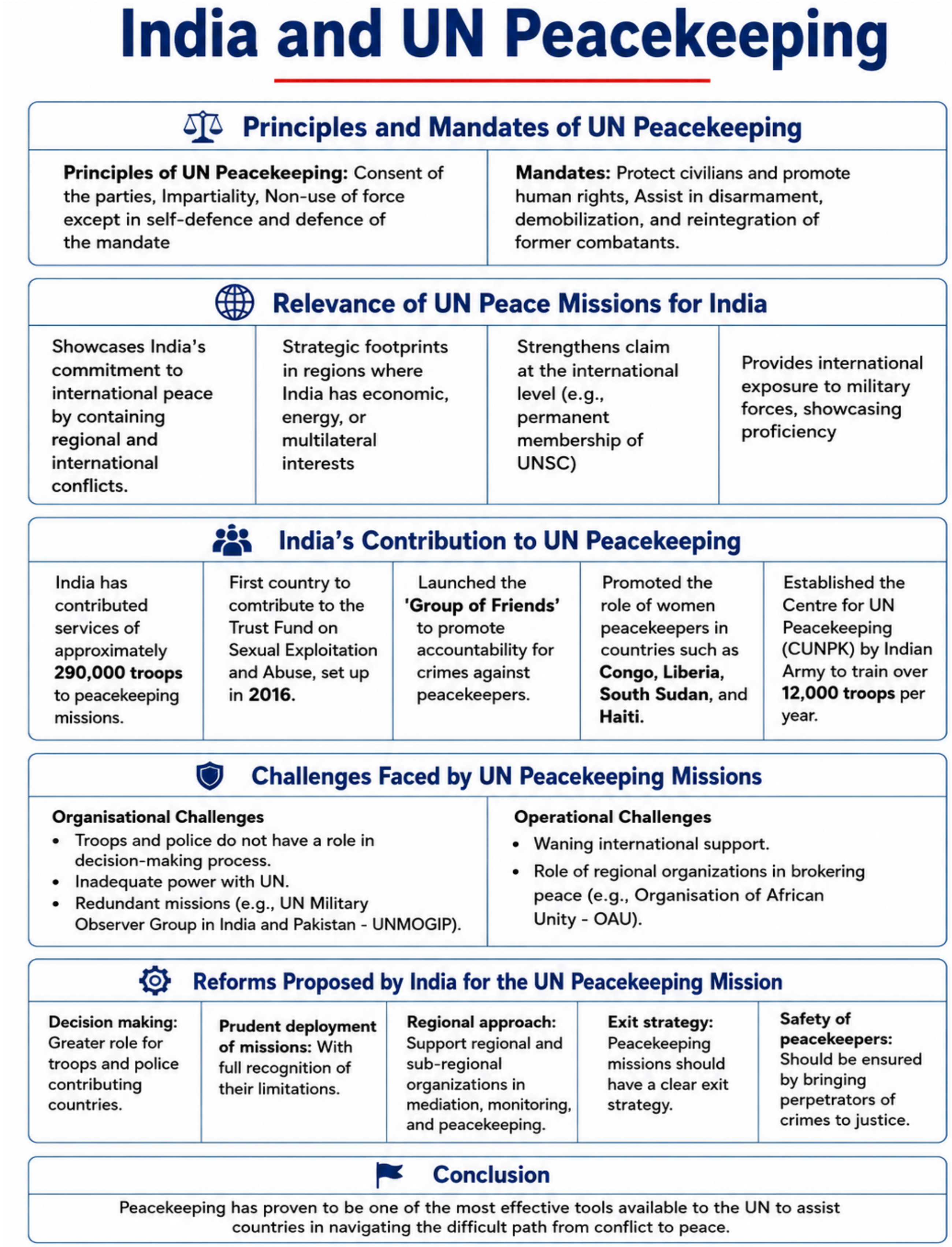
5.2.4. INDIA AND UN PEACEKEEPING AT A GLANCE



India and UN Peacekeeping

Principles and Mandates of UN Peacekeeping

Principles of UN Peacekeeping: Consent of the parties, Impartiality, Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate

Mandates: Protect civilians and promote human rights, Assist in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants.

Relevance of UN Peace Missions for India

- Showcases India's commitment to international peace by containing regional and international conflicts.
- Strategic footprints in regions where India has economic, energy, or multilateral interests
- Strengthens claim at the international level (e.g., permanent membership of UNSC)
- Provides international exposure to military forces, showcasing proficiency

India's Contribution to UN Peacekeeping

- India has contributed services of approximately **290,000 troops** to peacekeeping missions.
- First country to comtribute to the Trust Fund on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, set up in **2016**.
- Launched the **'Group of Friends'** to promote accountability for crimes against peacekeepers.
- Promoted the role of women peacekeepers in countries such as **Congo, Liberia, South Sudan**, and **Haiti.**
- Established the Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK) by Indian Army to train over **12,000 troops** per year.

Challenges Faced by UN Peacekeeping Missions

Organisational Challenges

- Troops and police do not have a role in decision-making process.
- Inadequate power with UN.
- Redundant missions (e.g., UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan - UNMOGIP).

Operational Challenges

- Waning international support.
- Role of regional organizations in brokering peace (e.g., Organisation of African Unity - OAU).

Reforms Proposed by India for the UN Peacekeeping Mission

- **Decision making:** Greater role for troops and police contributing countries.
- **Prudent deployment of missions:** With full recognition of their limitations.
- **Regional approach:** Support regional and sub-regional organizations in mediation, monitoring, and peacekeeping.
- **Exit strategy:** Peacekeeping missions should have a clear exit strategy.
- **Safety of peacekeepers:** Should be ensured by bringing perpetrators of crimes to justice.

Conclusion

Peacekeeping has proven to be one of the most effective tools available to the UN to assist countries in navigating the difficult path from conflict to peace.

5.3. INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)

Why in the News?

Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger recently withdrew from International Criminal Court (ICC).

More on the News

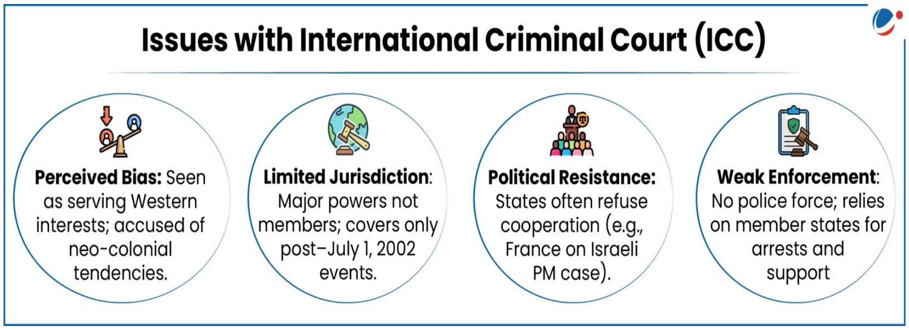
- In a joint statement, all three countries accused the ICC of being **"a tool of neo-colonial repression** controlled by imperialist powers."

About ICC

- It is the **world's first permanent international criminal court.**
- **Origin:** Founded by **Rome Statue** (Adopted in 1998 and entered in force in 2002)
- **Jurisdiction:** investigate, prosecute, and try **individuals** (**not groups or States**) accused of committing serious crimes
    - **Crimes under ICC's jurisdiction:** Genocide, Crimes against humanity, War crimes, crime of aggression.
- **Membership:** 125 member countries
    - **India, Israel, the US, Russia and China** are not parties to the Rome Statute.
- **Enforcement:** ICC's decisions are binding.

Significance

- First **permanent court** to prosecute individuals for serious international crimes.
- Tries crimes of **genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and aggression**.
- Ensures **accountability of individuals, not states**.
- Acts as a deterrent against mass atrocities.
- Strengthens global human rights and rule of law.



Issues with International Criminal Court (ICC)

Perceived Bias: Seen as serving Western interests; accused of neo-colonial tendencies.

Limited Jurisdiction: Major powers not members; covers only post-July 1, 2002 events.

Political Resistance: States often refuse cooperation (e.g., France on Israeli PM case).

Weak Enforcement: No police force; relies on member states for arrests and support

Conclusion

Despite limitations, ICC remains a key institution for **global accountability** but needs reforms for universality and enforcement strength.

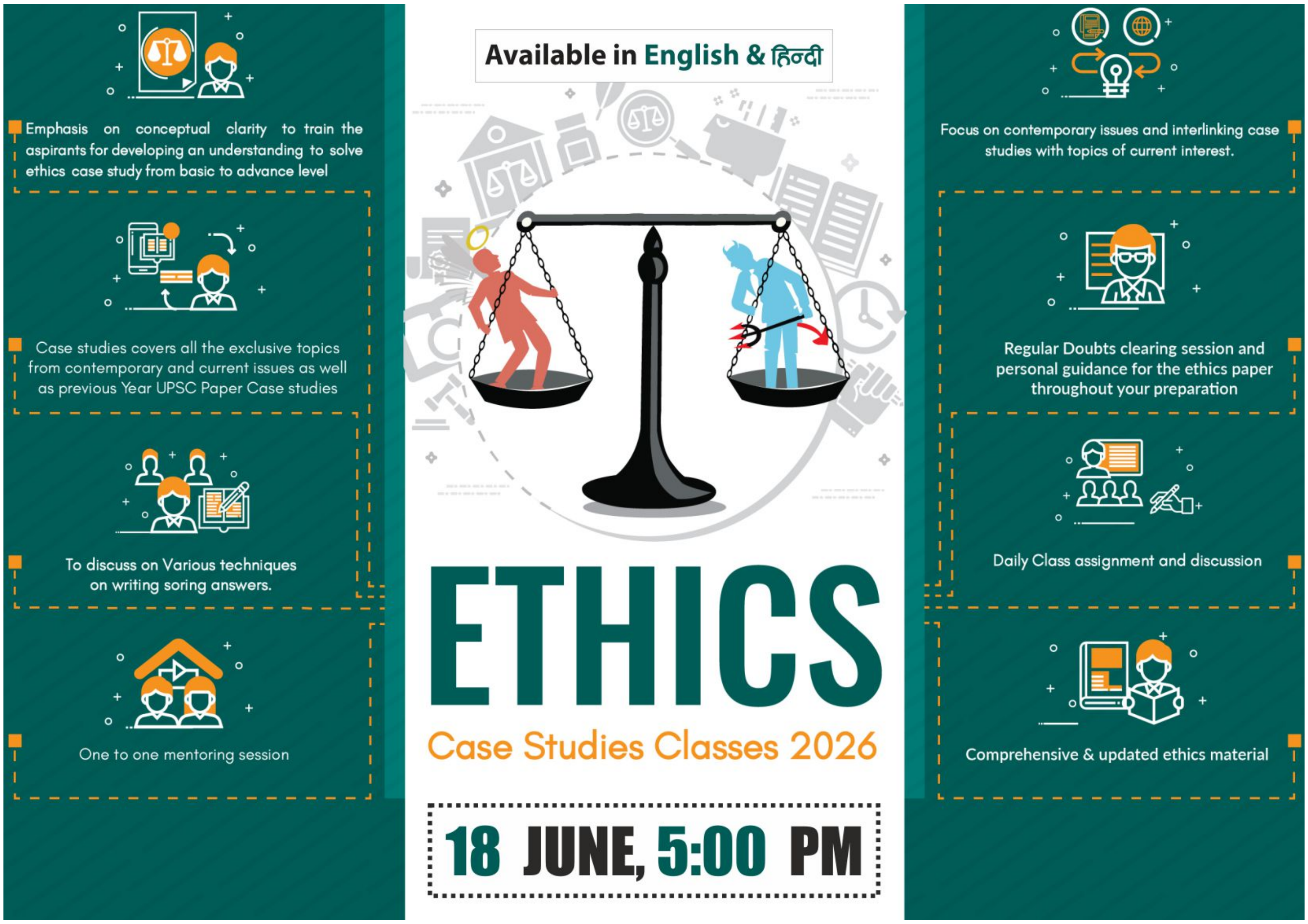
5.4 KEYWORDS

"À la carte menu" Approach / Selective Adherence	Guardrails of the International System	Sovereign Equality of States	Ambition–Capacity Gap
Veto-Driven Deadlocks	Bloc Voting	Politicisation and Selectivity	Tool of Neo-Colonial Repression
Consent, Impartiality, and Non-use of Force			

5.5 PRACTICE QUESTION

As the United Nations approaches its 80th anniversary, it continues to grapple with an "ambition–capacity gap" driven by shrinking finances, outdated structures, and overlapping mandates. Discuss the major structural and governance challenges plaguing the UN system today.

Introduction	Body Part-1	Body Part-2	Conclusion
Briefly highlight the UN's evolving role in global governance and introduce the growing mismatch between its expanding responsibilities and institutional capabilities.	Discuss institutional and organizational limitations such as outdated structures, representation deficits, fragmented agencies, and decision-making bottlenecks.	Examine issues related to financing, accountability, coordination, mandate overlap, implementation deficits, and declining member-state consensus.	Emphasize the need for comprehensive UN reforms to enhance legitimacy, effectiveness, and responsiveness to contemporary global challenges.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6. APPENDIX: KEY DATA AND FACTS

DYNAMICS OF CHANGING WORLD ORDER	
Fair & Representative Global Order	• **IMF Voting Imbalance:** The Global North possesses **9 times the voting power** in the IMF compared to the Global South. ○ The US alone holds 16.49% of the votes despite having only 4.22% of the global population. • **Technology Divide:** Just 100 firms (primarily from the US and China) are responsible for **40% of global R&D**, centralizing global power.
Rise of Global South	• **Economic Clout:** The Global South now accounts for **more than 40% of world trade**, according to UNCTAD.
US Withdrawal from International Organizations	• **US Withdrawal:** The US President signed a memorandum to end participation and funding for **66 international organizations** (35 non-UN and 31 UN bodies). • **Humanitarian & Health Crises**: Aid cuts could cause 22 million **preventable deaths by 2030 (The Lancet**).
Multilateralism in Climate Action	• **Financial Constraints:** Developed countries have **failed to mobilize** the promised **$100 billion annually.**
Multilateralism in Outer Space Governance	• **Framework:** Outer Space Treaty (1967), UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) (1959), Artemis Accords (2020).
Israel-US-Iran War	• **International Conventions/Treaties governing the issue:** UNSC Resolution 2817 (2026), UNCLOS. • **Trade and Energy Risks: 20% of the world's oil** passes via **Strait of Hormuz.** • **Implications for India:** ○ **Trade Decline:** India's trade with Iran (**$14 billion in 2017 to $1.4 billion 2024**). ○ **Diaspora Risk:** Risk to **10 million** Indian diaspora in Gulf with over 28,000 Indians in conflict zones. ○ **Agriculture & Food:** West Asia supplies **over 45% of India's fertilizer imports**, and 85% of domestic urea production relies on **imported liquefied natural gas**. ○ **Human Development:** The crisis could push nearly **2.5 million Indians into poverty**.
Energy Security Policy of India	• **Geographically Concentrated Import Dependency:** 85% crude oil, 50% natural gas, and 25% coal, largely from Gulf. • **Supply Chain Disruption:** Nearly 50% of crude oil & over 60% of LNG/LPG shipments transit Strait of Hormuz.
India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)	• **IMEC Corridor:** The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor is expected to cut transit time to Europe by up to **40%** and reduce logistics costs by around **30%**.
Nuclear Disarmament	• **Rising Warheads:** The SIPRI 2026 Yearbook reported an increase in operational nuclear warheads globally, noting that **India deployed 12 operational warheads** for the first time.

	• **India's Historical Stance:** India was the first nation to officially call for a **worldwide nuclear test ban in 1954** and proposed a three-phase nuclear elimination plan at the UNGA in 1988.
Indian Diaspora & Migration Policies	• **Size of India Diaspora: Largest in the world at 34 million Indian abroad.** • **Remittances: India** remains the world's largest recipient of remittances, bringing in **$135.46 billion in FY 2024–25**. Remittances represent **3–3.5% of India's GDP**, forming the second-largest external financing source after services. • **Global Influence:** Over **260 individuals of Indian origin** hold elected offices worldwide, and roughly **25% of Silicon Valley startups** are led by people of Indian origin. • **Anti-Immigration Impact:** Amid rising restrictive policies (like the US raising H-1B visa fees), the economic impact of migrants is underscored by the fact that **55% of U.S. $1-billion start-ups** had an immigrant founder
REGIONAL, AND GLOBAL GROUPING AND AGREEMENTS INVOLVING INDIA AND/OR AFFECTING INDIA'S INTEREST	
BRICS Summit	• **Membership Expansion:** The 17th BRICS Summit in Rio de Janeiro was the first to feature **11 full members**, welcoming Indonesia as the newest member alongside 10 partners and 8 invited nations. • **Economic Clout:** The BRICS grouping now represents approximately **49.5% of the global population**, around **40% of the global GDP**, and about **26% of global trade**. • **Climate Finance Goal:** A newly adopted framework calls on developed countries to provide **USD 300 billion annually by 2035** to developing nations.
SCO Summit	• **Expansion:** With the admission of Laos as a partner country, the SCO now encompasses **27 countries** (10 members and 17 partners). • **Global Reach:** The SCO holds a massive strategic presence covering **80% of Eurasia**, accounts for **42% of the global population**, and contributes **25% of the global GDP**.
QUAD	• **QUAD Represents:** 24% of World Population, 35% GDP, 18% Trade.
India-Indo Pacific	• **Indo-Pacific Influence:** The Indo-Pacific region, the primary focus of the QUAD, accounts for approximately **50% of global maritime trade** and **60% of global GDP**.
G20 Summit	• **G20 Represents**: 80% of Global GDP, 75% Exports, 60% Population.
Gaza Peace Summit	• **Demographic & Economic Stakes:** The Middle East region offers a major market with a projected fast-growing population of **580 million by 2030**. • **Indian Interests:** Stability in the region is vital for India, which relies on it for **70% of its oil imports** as well as massive remittances.
India And Its Neighbourhood Relations	
Indian Ocean Region	• **Significance for India**: 95% Trade by volume and 68% by value via sea. • **Maldives:** India is the Maldives' largest trading partner, with bilateral trade hitting **USD 548.97 million** in 2023. India recently extended an **INR 4,850 crores Line of Credit** to the Maldives and reduced debt repayment on India-

	funded projects. The World Bank projects the Maldives' public debt could reach **135.7% of its GDP by 2027**. • **Seychelles:** India announced a **USD 175 million special economic package** for development in Seychelles, which is a central pillar of India's SAGAR and MAHASAGAR visions due to its strategic location near the **Mozambique Channel**. • **Mauritius:** Mauritius constitutes around **25% of India's cumulative FDI** since 2000. Approximately **70% of the population** in Mauritius is of Indian origin.
India-China Relations	• **Trade Deficit:** India's trade deficit with China increased from USD 85 billion in 2023-24 to **USD 99 billion in 2024-25**. • **Foreign Investment:** India has allowed FDI from land-bordering countries (including China) to invest **up to 10% non-controlling stakes** in Indian companies. • **Resource Dominance:** China currently dominates global **rare earth extraction (70%)** and **processing (90%)**. • **Brahmaputra Dam:** China is building the **Medog mega dam** on the Yarlung Zangbo (Brahmaputra) River in Tibet, which is a run-of-the-river project expected to generate **three times more energy than the Three Gorges Dam**.
India-Pakistan Relations	• **Indus Water Treaty (1960):** The treaty grants India unrestricted use of **three eastern rivers** (Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej), while Pakistan controls **three western rivers** (Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab). • **Strategic Shift:** Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed a Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement establishing that an **aggression against one is an aggression against both**, potentially extending Pakistan's nuclear umbrella to the Middle East.
India-Nepal Relations	• **Borders and Connectivity:** The two countries share a **1,751 km open border** across 5 Indian states. In 2019, they completed South Asia's **first cross-border petroleum pipeline** connecting Motihari (India) to Amlekhgunj (Nepal). • **Energy Trade:** A 2024 power trade agreement targets the export of **10,000 megawatts (MW)** of hydroelectricity from Nepal to India over the **next 10 years**.
India-Bhutan Relations	• **Economic Support:** India contributed **73% of the external grant** for Bhutan's 12th Five Year Plan and extended a **₹1,500-crore concessional loan** and a ₹200-crore grant for the Gyalsung National Service Program. • **Hydropower:** India is associated with **5 hydroelectric projects totaling 2,986 MW** in Bhutan. Electricity exports to India account for approximately **40% of Bhutan's revenue and 25% of its GDP**.
India-Bangladesh Relations	• **Trade Imbalance:** Bilateral trade was **USD 13.46 billion in 2024-25**, remaining heavily skewed toward India. • **Security Concerns:** The two countries share an **864 km unfenced border** in challenging riverine and mountainous terrain, posing risks of illegal migration and cross-border terrorism.

	• **Water Sharing:** The **Ganga Water Treaty (1996)** is set to expire in **December 2026** without formal renewal discussions underway, and agreements on **53 shared rivers** (including the Teesta) remain unresolved.
Bilateral Grouping and Agreements Involving India And/Or Affecting India	
India-US Defence Ties	• **Status**: India designated Major Defense Partner (2016). • **Trade:** The US is India's top export destination, with total goods trade estimated at **$149 billion in 2025**. ○ Defense trade between the two nations exceeds **$20 billion**. • **Key Defence Agreements**: GSOMIA, 2002; LEMOA, 2016; COMCASA, 2018; BECA, 2020. • **Major Acquisitions**: P-8I, C-17, Apache, MH-60R, M777 howitzers.
India-Russia Relations	• Russia remains India's top arms supplier, accounting for **36% of imports**. • Bilateral trade reached **USD 68.7 billion in FY 2024–25**, though it is heavily skewed, with Indian exports at only **USD 4.88 billion** (causing a Rupee surplus). • **90%** of this trade uses rupee-ruble mechanisms.
India-Europe Relations	• **European Union (EU):** The EU is India's largest trading partner in goods, with trade reaching **€120 billion in 2024**. The new India-EU FTA secures market access for **99% of India's exports**. • **EFTA (TEPA):** The European Free Trade Association committed to investing **USD 100 billion over 15 years** in India, which is expected to create **1 million direct jobs**. • **United Kingdom:** The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) eliminates over **99% of tariff lines**. Bilateral trade stands at **USD 56 billion**, with the UK as the **6th largest investor** ($35 billion). The UK is also home to **1.864 million** Indians. • **Germany:** Bilateral trade surpassed **$50 billion in 2024**, making Germany the **9th-largest FDI investor** in India.
India-West Asia Relations	• **GCC & Arab League:** The Gulf Cooperation Council is India's **largest trading bloc (US$ 178.56 billion)** and supplies **70% of its crude oil**. The Arab League accounts for over **47% of India's crude oil** and **50% of its fertilizers**, with trade standing at over **US$ 240 billion**. • **UAE:** Bilateral trade reached **~$100 billion by 2024–25**, making the UAE India's **3rd largest trading partner**. Remittances from the **3.5 million Indians** in the UAE account for **19.2%** of India's total remittances. • **Saudi Arabia:** The **5th largest trading partner** for India, with bilateral trade at **~$43 billion**.
India-Africa Relations	• **Trade:** crossed **USD 100 billion (2024–25)**, making India Africa's **3rd largest trading partner**. • India has provided **USD 12 billion** in concessional Lines of Credit to 42 African nations. • Strategically, Africa holds **~48% of global cobalt** and **~47% of manganese reserves**.

India- Indo-Pacific (ASEAN, East Asia, Oceania)	• **ASEAN:** Bilateral trade between India and ASEAN stands around **123 Billion USD (2024-25)**. • **Australia:** Driven by the ECTA, Indian exports to Australia doubled to **USD 8.5 billion (FY 2024–25)**, with total trade reaching **USD 19.3 billion** by early FY 2025-26. • **New Zealand:** A new FTA aims to double bilateral trade to **$5 billion USD** within five years, while New Zealand committed to a **USD 20 billion investment** over 15 years. • **South Korea:** Bilateral trade is at **$27 billion**, with an Indian trade deficit of **$15.19 billion**. The two nations aim to double bilateral trade to **$54 billion by 2030**. • **Japan:** Bilateral trade for FY 2023-24 was **US$ 22.85 billion**.
Latin America	• **Bilateral trade** reached **USD 35.73 billion in 2023-24**, with Indian firms investing **USD 12 billion** across various sectors. • **Crude oil imports** from Venezuela, Mexico, and Brazil constitute **30%** of India's regional imports.
Important International Institutions, Agencies, And Fora, Their Structure, Mandate	
United Nations (UN) Bodies & Reforms	• **UN80 Initiative:** A system-wide reform action plan running from November 2025 to December 2026 to mark the **UN's 80th anniversary**, aiming to make the body more agile and efficient despite shrinking finances. • **Historical Impact:** The UN has deployed over **68,000 peacekeepers** across 11 missions, helped register **377 million voters** globally, and saves approximately **3 million lives annually** by supplying vaccines to 45% of the world's children. • **UNSC Demands:** The **G4 nations** (India, Germany, Japan, Brazil) continue to push for permanent seats on the UN Security Council and demand restrictions on the use of the veto in cases of mass atrocities and genocide.
India and UN Peacekeeping	• **Troop Contributions:** India has historically contributed the services of approximately **290,000 troops** to UN peacekeeping missions. • **Training & Accountability:** India established the Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK), which trains over **12,000 troops per year**. • India was the first country to contribute to the **UN's Trust Fund on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse** in 2016.

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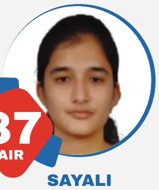
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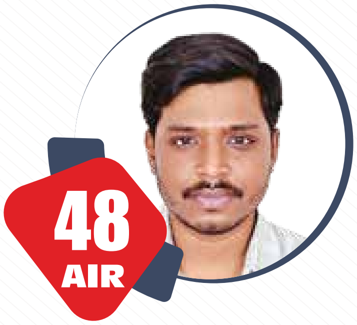

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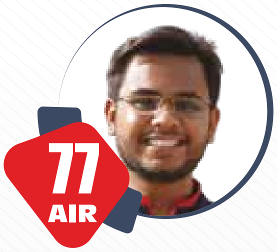

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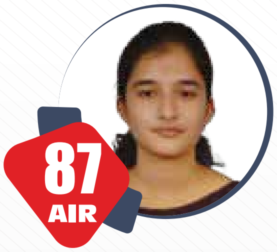

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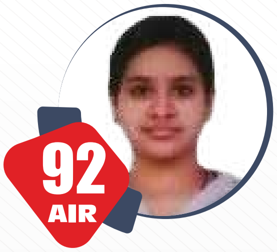

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